Unique Rating System Deemed a Success

A unique and award-winning rating system, that has resulted in all residential property owners paying the same dollar amount for their council rates in the Tasmanian municipality of Brighton, has been deemed a success by the council. In what was believed to be an Australian first, Brighton Council, from 1 July 2007, introduced a flat rate system for its residential properties under which each property owner was charged a rate payment of $670. The flat rate system replaced Brighton's previous system under which rate payments were scaled relative to property values. The new system has resulted in the council receiving its lowest recorded level of complaints from ratepayers, while generating much positive feedback from the community. Council’s rating system has received interest from councils across Tasmania and Australia and at least one other Tasmanian council is considering implementing a flat rate system for its residential property owners. For more information, contact Brighton Council’s Deputy General Manager, Greg Davoren, on (03) 6268 7000.

Traineeship Scheme to Overcome Planning Staff Shortage

Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula Shire is investing $600,000 over two years on an innovative traineeship scheme, designed to increase the number of planners and administrators in the Council’s Strategic Planning Unit. Council has selected six young people from within the shire to study for their Certificate Four in Local Government Planning at Swinburne University of Technology while they receive on-the-job training. The traineeship scheme started at the beginning of 2008 when the three men and three women were selected from more than 150 applicants. The trainees have already started issuing planning permits under supervision and, if the scheme proves successful, more trainees will be accepted to overcome staff shortages created by employee turnover and natural attrition. For more details, phone the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council on 1300 850 600.

Webcasts of Council Meetings Draw Community Interest

Warringah Council has received strong community interest in its innovative initiative to broadcast council meetings live on the Internet. Last year, the council webcast its fortnightly council meetings and those that drew the highest audiences were ones that dealt with hot local issues. Warringah’s webcasts were designed to give the 140,000 residents spread across the municipality the opportunity to view meetings, regardless of how far away they lived from the council’s offices. The webcasts include responses to questions from members of the general public attending the meetings, as well as regular council discussion and decision-making. Since Warringah commenced broadcasting its council meetings in early 2005, a number of other municipalities have also begun webcasting their own council meetings. To access Warringah Council’s webcasting site, visit www.warringah.nsw.gov.au/council_them/then/meetings.aspx.

The municipality of Brighton where residential property owners enjoy a flat rate rating system.
Independent Company to Guide Economic Development

Wollongong City Council has taken the innovative step of establishing an independent company, charged with marketing the city and encouraging economic development in the municipality. Advantage Wollongong commenced operating as an unlisted public company on 1 July. While its board of management is to include council representatives, the company will be run independently by the local business community. Council will provide $500,000 annually towards the operations of the company, with additional funds being sought from State and Federal Government grants. Advantage Wollongong will have the roles of: marketing and promoting the city to the wider business community; lobbying in regard to economic development projects in Wollongong; encouraging new business and employment opportunities for the region; and developing strategies that deal with local economic development issues such as skills shortages. For more information, contact Wollongong City Council’s Manager Economic Development, Bob Doyle, at rdoyle@wollongong.nsw.gov.au.

New Shires Have Commenced

The Northern Territory’s new shires officially commenced on 1 July 2008. Under the reforms of the new Local Government Act, sixty-three local governing bodies have merged to form twelve shires and four municipal councils in the Northern Territory. Elections for the eight new shires will be held on 25 October. Following the elections, all Northern Territory councils will be working together on developing new regional management plans, as determined by the Local Government Act.

WALGA Releases Draft Sustainability Plan

A WALGA-commissioned draft plan to help councils become more sustainable, proposes the creation of a regional system of service delivery that leverages the economies of collective Local Government geographic groups, while retaining local councils to represent the specific interests of their communities. Whilst the plan, The Journey - Sustainability into the Future, is still in draft form and open to the Local Government sector for a 15-week feedback period, it has been positively received by Western Australia’s Minister for Local Government, Minister Ljiljanna Ravlich, who has proposed a collaborative approach between the State Government, WALGA and the Local Government Managers Australia, to develop an implementation plan. A copy of the report can be downloaded from the WALGA website at www.walga.asn.au.

Report calls for Multiple Candidacy in SA Council Elections

A proposal to introduce multiple candidacy in Local Government elections in South Australia so candidates who are unsuccessful in a mayoral election can still be elected as councillors, is one of the key recommendations of an independent report commissioned by the South Australian Local Government Association and the Rann Government. The report also calls for a caretaker period for councils during a Local Government election campaign, as occurs in State and Federal elections. The report was commissioned to examine ways to boost voter participation in council elections in South Australia, where voting is voluntary. The voter turnout in South Australia’s 2006 council elections was 31.6%, down from the 40% turnout in 2000. The report also calls for the issue of compulsory voting to be considered after the next council elections in 2010. A copy of the Wagstaff report can be downloaded from www.localgovt.sa.gov.au/electionsreview.
Local Government Meetings and Events

August

1  Constitutional Recognition Forum
   Launceston
   6233 5966

13  General Meeting
    Hobart
    6233 5966

13  General Management Committee Meeting
    Hobart
    6233 5966

September

17-18  General Managers’ Workshop
       Hobart
       6233 5966

Conferences and Professional Development

July

27-29  1st International Sprayed Sealing Conference
       Adelaide, SA

August

27-30  Australian Sister Cities Association 2008 National Conference
       Gosford, NSW
       (02) 4325 8903

28-29  Benchmarking Best Practice in Local Government Conference
       Sydney, NSW

29  Procurement and Contract Management for Local Government Seminar
    Sydney, NSW
    (02) 9466 5456

30-1  ARRB Conference
      Adelaide, SA

31  Arthur Shelley Breakfast Seminar - Leadership Styles
    Hobart, TAS
    www.tcci.com.au

31-2  Western Australian Annual Local Government Convention
      Perth, WA
      www.walga.asn.au


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5-7  QLD Main Roads Technology Forum
     Brisbane, QLD
     craig.l.moss@mainroads.qld.gov.au

6  Employer of Choice Conference
    Launceston, TAS

6  Procurement and Contract Management for Local Government Seminar
    Brisbane, QLD
    (02) 9466 5456

6-7  Innovation in Planning and Development Assessment Summit
    Sydney, NSW

6-8  Workplace and Risk Summit
    Melbourne, VIC
    www.mav.asn.au/workplace