Hobart City Council Says “Sorry”

At a historic and an emotional reception, held at the Hobart Town Hall on 10 December 2008, the Lord Mayor of Hobart offered an apology on behalf of the Hobart City Council for actions it initiated to ban the attendance of the Tasmanian Gay Law Reform Group from Salamanca Market twenty years ago. In 1988, the Hobart City Council prohibited attendance of the group at the market, resulting in the arrest of supporters of the group. Lord Mayor of Hobart, Ald Rob Valentine said in the spirit of reconciliation, the Council decided to host a reception in the Town Hall to offer an apology to all those affected by the events of twenty years ago. “This reception allows an opportunity to reflect on the past and acknowledge changes in our community since that time,” said Ald Valentine. “The Council is committed to Hobart being a city of strong communities based on diversity, participation and empathy. As a key element of this commitment, the Council is now working constructively with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community,” he said.

Local Government Bushfire Recovery Fund

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has established the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Fund for councils wanting to make donations to assist severely affected municipalities with their bushfire recovery efforts. The MAV will administer the fund and ensure that 100% of donations will be allocated to critically affected councils. MAV will also ensure that contributions are wholly spent on municipal efforts to rebuild communities, their infrastructure and facilities. A report on the funding allocation will be provided to donor councils by mid-April. For any council wishing to make a donation, the account details are: Municipal Association of Victoria Grants Account - BSB: 083-004 / Account: 858943210. Please contact Alison Lyon on (03) 9667 5522, or email alyon@mav.asn.au for further details.

Planning for Ageing Population

Understanding a community’s demographic is a key factor in planning for their future. A new tool that will help NSW councils plan for their ageing populations is now available on the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW website. The computer based Resource for Ageing Population Planning (RAPP) shows the change in a community’s characteristics from 1996 until today, as well as the projected populations from 2006 to 2021 by age and sex. The RAPP is available at www.lgsa.org.au/RAPP. For more information about the RAPP, contact Acting Strategy Manager - Social Policy, Margaret Kay, on (02) 9242 4082.

Australia’s First Bike Hire Scheme

Brisbane City Council has signed a 20-year contract with JCDecaux for the installation, operation and maintenance of an innovative new bicycle scheme. Brisbane cyclists will be able to access free bicycles at 150 locations in Australia’s first bike hire scheme. Brisbane residents and tourists will be able to access one of 2,000 bikes, by using swipe cards. Subscription to the scheme will cost $55 a year, $25 a quarter, or $10 a day for casual users, with the first 30 minutes of use free. Bike docking stations will operate from 5.00am to 10.00pm every day of the year. The initiative is designed to encourage more people in the CBD to undertake short trips by bicycle, to reduce traffic congestion and encourage better personal health.
A moving moment as Lord Mayor Rob Valentine embraces gay advocate, Rodney Croome to say “sorry”

photography by nick Osborne

Cash for Cleaning up the Territory

The Northern Territory will introduce a cash for containers scheme to reduce litter and boost recycling efforts. The NT Government has been supportive of a national approach to legislation providing cash for containers but, due to the slow progress, has decided to take the lead in the hope that other states will follow. The cash for containers legislation is expected to be in place by 2011 once particular operational aspects of the scheme have been investigated. A committee has been set up to guide the development of the legislation, ensure that there won’t be a financial impost to taxpayers, and to ensure the scheme can be delivered in both urban and remote centres. The NT’s scheme will be modelled on South Australia’s successful container deposit legislation where cans, bottles and cartons attract a 10 cent refund.

WA Councils Prepare for Amalgamation Process

The WA Government has released a set of Structural Reform Guidelines to assist councils throughout the state to prepare for voluntary amalgamations and reductions in the number of councillors. The state’s 139 councils have been given until the end of August to achieve structural reform, based on voluntary amalgamations. The Structural Reform Guidelines contain a set of principles which councils are expected to use as a reference to determine their long-term viability. Project teams, comprising members of the proposed amalgamating councils, are to consider how the preferred amalgamated council will improve social, economic and environmental capacities for their communities. The project teams will be required to develop community consultation strategies, consider membership of regional groupings, a transition time frame and estimate additional costs that are likely to be incurred as part of the transition. The Structural Reform Guidelines can be found at www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au/Publications/Docs/StructuralReformGuidelines2009.pdf.

Bushfire Risk Areas

The South Australian Government is considering changing the state’s planning laws to take into account climate change considerations in areas identified as being at risk of bushfires. A draft version of a Minister’s Code, Undertaking Development in Bushfire Protection Areas, that will soon be given legislative force, will provide for uniform building and development standards across 39 councils that contain bushfire protection areas within their boundaries. The code will require existing development regulations to undergo some amendments to ensure that development applications are assessed against these sections of the code, and is likely to need further updating as new information, such as the interim report of the Royal Commission into the Victorian bushfires, becomes available. The South Australian Government also plans to introduce another new code that aims to streamline arrangements for clearing vegetation for bushfire protection.

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