Five Minutes with Mayor Barry Easther
West Tamar Council

Birth date: 21st October 1940!!

How long have you resided in the West Tamar district and what do you enjoy most about the area?
I moved from Launceston to the Sidmouth area with my family, Jan and four young children 34 years ago. This brought me closer to my employment at the time and the wide-open spaces of our 42 acres with a few farm animals was really great for the children. We love the country atmosphere and the local people were very welcoming.

What motivates you in life?
I enjoy being involved in the community, probably following on from an example set by my parents?

How do you like to spend your free time?
I enjoy spending time with our family and grandchildren. Summer at our beach house at Spring Beach is always special with family and friends, as are the camping holidays with our 4WD and camping trailer in the Australian outback.

Name three qualities that you appreciate most in people.
1) Honesty
2) People who are interested, listen and understand
3) People who are open to others points of view

When you were a child, you wanted to be...
From a very young age, after the weekly experience of riding on the “garbo’s” horse and cart as he collected the rubbish in our street and much to my mother’s disgust, I wanted to be a garbage man!

Name three previous occupations you have held in the past.
1) Clerk in the office of D.L.Hollis Motors in Launceston.
2) In the cost accounting office at Patons and Baldwins (later Coates Patons) in Launceston
3) With Forest Resources at Long Reach, initially in the accounting area and later as the company’s industrial and public relations department.

What motivated you to become involved in Local Government?
I was approached by members of the local farmers and graziers group to consider standing for Council. It seemed to be a good idea at the time and their support for me at the election was greatly appreciated.

How many years have you served as:
Councillor - Over 26 years
Mayor - Four years on the first occasion and 9 years on the second and present term.

What has been the most memorable moment of your Local Government career?
Despite the trauma and sadness surrounding the Beaconsfield Mine rock fall, I was privileged to be, as one commentator put it, “the reassuring face of the local community”. It was a time when I was supported by the strength and resilience of the Beaconsfield community. And what a memorable moment it was when I was asked to respond to a speech of welcome, given to the Beaconsfield community by Prime Minister John Howard, in the Great Hall at Parliament House, Canberra.

What key lessons were gained from this experience?
I personally gained much media experience but, in particular, the key lesson was the importance for councils to have Emergency Management Plans in place and the capacity to work together as a team as the plans are implemented.

What do you enjoy most about your role as Mayor?
The involvement I have representing Council at all kinds of activities and events, meeting people and assisting them with local issues, and making a contribution to the future wellbeing of the West Tamar.

How do you feel about being elected as LGAT President and what do you hope to achieve in this role?
It is an honour to have been elected President and I am very aware of the significance and responsibilities of the position. During my term I hope to make a contribution to the security and sustainability of the Local Government sector into the future.

Most embarrassing moment in your Local Government career?
When I saw a photo in the local newspaper of a group of people at a function where I was supposed to have provided a welcome (I had other things on my mind that day).

What’s the best advice anyone has ever given you?
Have confidence to believe in yourself
What word best describes you?
Straightforward

What word best describes you?
Straightforward
A seminar on safe driving practices at work, a session on eating well, a seminar on nanotechnology, and a presentation on dealing with stress in the workplace and home are just a few of the FREE events happening across the state during Safe Work Tasmania Week 2009. Remember, safe business is good business.

For a copy of the program of events or to register to attend, visit the WorkCover Tasmania website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au or call Callum on 6233 3928.
Karissa Baker
Children’s Services
Huon Valley Council

Ten months is not a very long time but it has been long enough for Karissa Baker, the Huon Valley Council’s Centre-Based Care Coordinator, to be noticed for her valuable contribution to the Council and community.

With a Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies and a Bachelor of Teaching, as well as experience starting up a new long day care centre in Sydney and teaching in an International (British) School in Shanghai, P.R.C., Karissa brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role.

The position involves coordinating the day-to-day running of The Cottage Long-Day Care Centre in Huonville, the Geeveston Child Care Centre and the Dover Child Care Centre. Supporting staff in meeting state licensing and national accreditation requirements and in achieving the best practice possible is an integral part of it. Karissa has close contact with families in the local community and aims to offer them convenient, quality care.

The growth experienced within the municipality has brought with it many new families requiring care for their children. Without quality care, options for families that enable them to contribute through employment, study or volunteering would be limited.

The greatest and most rewarding distinction that Karissa has noticed working in Local Government, as opposed to private organisations, is the sense of being part of a bigger picture. “The continuity of services that families within the community access is visible with the close communication which occurs across departments,” Karissa said. “Families are more than customers; they are part of something bigger - a community.”

Karissa takes great pleasure in watching children develop a sense of security with the carers, particularly after a tumultuous start in care. She is also pleased to be able to reassure parents of their abilities and to offer practical family advice when required.

Council’s Manager Community Services, Daniel Smee, said Karissa has gained an enormous amount of respect, both within the organisation and the community, as a competent operator. “She is an excellent communicator and her professional approach has seen her excel in a new and challenging role,” he said. “Her passion for child care is evident in her work and she is strongly committed to the principles of quality care.”

Jonathan Magor
Works and Engineering
Latrobe Council

With an Associate Diploma in Civil Engineering, Jonathan Magor started his Local Government career in 1994 at Launceston City Council in the Drainage Department, later moving to the Development Assessment area. Eight years ago, Jonathan commenced work with Latrobe Council as Technical Officer. Over a five-year period, Jonathan studied during the evenings for a Bachelor of Technology in Engineering and Management through Deakin University, completing his studies in 2007. He undertook the caretaker role as Manager Engineering Services a number of times and eventually became the Manager Works and Engineering.

As one of three managers under the General Manager, Jonathan liaises with elected members and other employees to best manage works, expenditure and other resources to maintain the municipality to the satisfaction of residents, visitors and other community groups. Jonathan enjoys the variety of work that crosses his desk as an employee of a smaller council, and community members benefit by being able to deal directly with decision-makers with a broad knowledge of Council activities and requirements.

Being part of the process that shapes the built environment and receiving positive feedback on any work done by Council is the most satisfying part of the role. Jonathan feels a great sense of achievement when works have been completed that will serve the community for many years, particularly when the project has taken a long time to develop and come to fruition.

Latrobe General Manager, Gerald Monson said Jonathan is well respected by his peers, fellow employees, councillors and members of the community. “He is always prepared to investigate various options for problems that arise, which assists greatly in council decision-making,” he said. “His recent promotion to Manager of Works and Engineering is well deserved.”

Continued Page 10
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Helen Parker
LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1981, Helen Parker took on a three-week temp position with the Launceston City Council, typing rates summons on a manual typewriter using carbon paper to produce multiple copies. She was then offered an administration position in the Treasury Department and later, Council put her in charge of the Parking Department. In 1988, Helen left Council for a short time to have her girls. In 1991, the Customer Service Centre was opened and Helen became Senior Customer Service Officer.

Helen describes her role is very diverse, depending on what is going on in Council at the time. Her team provides information across a broad range of issues, as well as cashiering, reception, sales and bookings. As Senior Customer Service Officer, Helen must ensure that everything flows smoothly - a task made easier through the dedication and commitment of her team.

As the first port of call for residents who need to use Council’s services, Helen finds it rewarding to be able to assist people quickly and likes it when regular customers come in and wait for her to serve them. Over the years, she has been able to develop some wonderful relationships with both the public and staff.

Highlights of her career include being nominated as a Star Performer, and seeing the Customer Service Centre evolve into what it currently is, providing a high level of service.

Launceston City Council General Manager, Frank Dixon, said since joining Council, Helen’s exceptional attitude towards her job has been an inspiration to others. “Helen is a mentor for other Customer Service staff and has readily stepped in as interim manager whenever needed. Her helpful, loyal and caring approach is appreciated by all who come in contact with her,” he said.

John Devlin
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
WEST COAST COUNCIL

John Devlin commenced duties as Health and Building Inspector with Queenstown Council in 1979 after working 15 years as an electrician and having undertaken a Health Inspectors course with the Royal Society of Health. In 1983, he gained a Certificate in Health Surveying.

As an Environmental Health Officer, John plays a significant role in protecting and enhancing the health and safety of the community by administering a variety preventative measures such as immunisation, food premises surveillance, environmental and recreational water monitoring, waste management, safety of places of assembly, the issue of permits, licenses and abatement notices, and animal control management. A proactive approach to community awareness is a key factor in this achievement.

John enjoys the diversity of the job and interaction with the public in providing advice and guidance on Council’s operations, especially in regional communities where the ‘local’ is so important in government and councils are the hub of communities. It is a career he would recommend to any person seeking professional status in the realm of environmental health science.

“Being able to study and qualify whilst practicing in the job since 1979 has been a great foundation to progress through many changes with Local Government on the West Coast over the last 30 years”, John said. The integration of Hydro families into Queenstown in 1985, the Local Government amalgamations in 1993, infrastructure upgrades to towns and continual legislative changes are some of the challenges he has faced on the job which have provided a great sense of satisfaction.

West Coast Council General Manager, Peter Harder, said the role of an EHO in a region like the West Coast involves multi-tasking at the highest level. “John has been consistently diligent and self-motivated, fulfilling this often thankless role with total professionalism”, he said. “In a career spanning 30 years, John has faced many challenges and changes but he has always accepted and adapted to them. The West Coast has greatly benefited from his contribution,” Peter said.
LGAT Welcomes New President

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) welcomes Barry Easther, Mayor of West Tamar Council, as the Association’s new President. His appointment follows the resignation of former LGAT President, Mike Gaffney, who recently successfully contested the Legislative Council seat of Mersey.

Mayor Easther nominated for the Presidential role along with Mayor Charles Arnold of King Island Council and Ald David Traynor of Clarence City Council. Counting for the vacancy was conducted by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission on 28 July, with Mayor Easther winning the ballot comfortably.

Mayor Easther has had a long and distinguished career in Local Government and achieved national notoriety during the Beaconsfield mining disaster for his leadership of the community during such a devastating event. In 2007, Mayor Easther was awarded an Order of Australia for his contribution to Local Government and the community. He has served as Mayor of West Tamar Council from 1990 to 1994 and since 2000, having first been elected to Council in 1983. He has been the Vice President of the Association for the past three years.

Mayor Easther paid tribute to his predecessor, Mike Gaffney, highlighting the strong leadership he had demonstrated through the water and sewerage reform process, his strong work ethic and his overall ability to bring councils together on issues and to discuss them in an open and respectful way.

“He may not be the tallest President we have had but he leaves big shoes to fill and I hope that I can represent Tasmanian councils as well as Mike was able,” Mayor Easther commented. “The remnants of water and sewerage reform and the broader challenges of Local Government sustainability remain on the agenda. I will be working to represent councils in the building of a sustainable and vibrant sector that meets the needs of the communities it represents,” he said.

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Doyle has his Day

The Huon Valley Council has announced the appointment of Glenn Doyle to the position of General Manager.

Mr Doyle was the Council’s former Deputy General Manager and Manager of Economic Development and Rural Health. He has extensive Local Government experience, having served at the Huon Valley Council and at a senior level with the Hobart City Council, and brings a thorough understanding of Local Government, astute business sense, and a strong commitment to community and customer service.

Mr Doyle has also served as Council’s acting General Manager on a number of occasions, most recently, following the departure of former General Manager Geoff Cockerill at the end of July.

Huon Valley Mayor, Clr Robert Armstrong, said Mr Doyle has shown outstanding leadership over what has been a difficult period and that, while Mr Doyle was an internal applicant, the community could expect a fresh approach to the way in which the Council’s administration operates and communicates with its stakeholders.

New General Manager for George Town

Following an extensive process of nationwide advertising and the evaluation of prospective applicants, Mr Stephen Brown has been appointed to the position of General Manager of the George Town Council. His appointment follows the retirement of Ngaire McCrindle.

As the former Manager of Engineering Services with the Council, Mr Brown has proved to be a capable and valued member of the Executive. The Mayor of George Town, Clr Douglas Burt, said Mr Brown brings to the job a vision for the organisation, understanding of the future challenges for Local Government, and the respect of the organisation and the Councillors for his skills and abilities.

Mr Brown, who has been employed with the Council since 2006, has an extensive Engineering background with both Local Government and private enterprise, as a Chartered Professional Engineer, a Corporate Member of Engineers Australia and a Fellow of the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australia. He also holds a postgraduate qualification in Municipal and Highway Engineering.

Flinders Council under New Leadership

After an extensive executive search nationally, Flinders Council has appointed Mr Raoul Harper as the new General Manager.

Mr Harper, who took up the position in early August, brings a strong background in Local Government, private enterprise and non-government organisations. He is also a current board member of the Tasmanian Environmental Industries Council and Chairman of the Stompin Youth Dance Company. Mr Harper comes from a Tasmanian family that has had a long history of serving regional communities, in particular on the East Coast of Tasmania, and Local Government has always held a special appeal to him.

Mr Harper said he appreciates the connection to community, place and people that comes from working in Local Government and enjoys being able to assist communities in articulating a vision, while building and managing the structures needed to meet their potential.

The Mayor and Councillors see the commitment from Mr Harper as a positive step in their strategy to build a strong, vibrant, forward thinking base for the community and investors alike.
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French Recognised on Tasmanian Honour Roll

Ald Sandra French of Burnie City Council is among 30 women who have been inducted onto the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women for their inspirational leadership, compassion and outstanding commitment in their chosen fields.

The 2009 inductees were announced at a special presentation, held on 7 August in Launceston. Ald French has been recognised for her contributions to a wide-range of community organisations and for her years of dedicated service as a teacher in the North and North-West of the state. In 1985, she became the second ever female elected to the Burnie City Council, and the first female elected Mayor in 1990. Today, Ald French is one of the three longest-serving Burnie City Councillors. 

A full list of the 2009 inductees is available online at www.women.tas.gov.au.

New Senior Policy Officer Joins LGAT

The Local Government Association of Tasmania welcomes Kate Hiscock, who recently joined the LGAT team as Senior Policy Officer. Kate’s role will include policy issues in the areas of health and social policy, infrastructure, building and planning. (See full details on page 38)

Kate has a Bachelor of Arts, with Honours in Psychology and a Master of Health Science. Most recently, she worked for a private consultancy developing and implementing community and stakeholder engagement programs.

Prior to this, Kate worked in State Government for a number of years, predominantly in the areas of strategic infrastructure policy and road safety, gaining considerable experience in community engagement, policy development and research.

As well as senior policy and project management roles in State Government, Kate also worked as an advisor in the office of the Minister for Infrastructure. One significant project that Kate managed was the development and implementation of the Tasmania Road Safety Strategy 2007-2016 and, related to that, the first Action Plan.

Kate Hiscock may be reached on (03) 6233 5971 or email kate.hiscock@lgat.tas.gov.au.

Spotlight Shines on Planetarium Manager

A gift for communicating has led to a national honour for one Launceston City Council employee. Martin George, the Planetarium and Space Sciences Manager at Council’s Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG), was awarded the Dave Allen Prize by the Astronomical Society of Australia for exceptional achievement in astronomy communication.

Mr George runs Tasmania’s only Planetarium, which has been enjoyed by some 200,000 people over 40 years. It has been moved to QVMAG’s Inveresk site and is being refurbished as part of the facility’s redevelopment. His passion for astronomy and space research results in frequent appearances on radio and television, as well as regular newspaper columns.

Mr George said the prize is particularly important in 2009, as the world celebrates the International Year of Astronomy and 400 years since Galileo first turned a telescope to the sky.
Dedication Reaps Rewards

Burnie City Council Environmental Health Officer, Simon McGee, proved full-time work and study is possible with sterling results. Simon was recently awarded a medal by the University of Western Sydney’s Dean, for academic excellence in the Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Health).

After three years of gruelling study and working full-time, the 22-year-old was rewarded for his hard work and graduated within the top 2% of the University. Simon put his academic success down to a team effort. He said the juggling of study and full-time work often proved impossible but was achievable, thanks to his support network. “While it is nice to be acknowledged for my achievements at Uni, there are other people out there more deserving of receiving a reward than I am,” Simon said. “If it wasn’t for the encouragement, perseverance and the tolerance of my family and my boss here at work, I doubt I would have even finished the first year of my course.”

Simon has worked at Burnie City Council for four years and said the hardest part of his job was explaining his role to others. “The role of an EHO is so varied that it’s hard to describe exactly what one does,” he said. “I really enjoy the variety of tasks the job affords - one day I could be at the beach collecting water samples and the very next, I could be inspecting a local restaurant or takeaway food shop. “It’s great to be able to get out and about, particularly on a nice, sunny day,” he said.