Collaboration and cooperation are two vital elements for addressing Local Governments’ response to climate change. The Premier’s Local Government Council has agreed to joint work between the State and Local Governments on specific climate change initiatives. These include sharing methodologies on assessing carbon footprints, joint community consultation and education programs, assessing the impact of climate change on Local Government infrastructure, and sharing knowledge on other successful climate change initiatives.

To facilitate a collaborative and coordinated approach, the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) convened a Climate Change Forum in Launceston on 29 May. The forum followed on from extensive consultation with Tasmanian councils in 2007 and was attended by over 50 council officers and elected members, representing most areas of Local Government core business. Kingborough Mayor Graham Bury kicked off the morning with the welcome address and was followed by Greg Johannes, Executive Director of the Tasmanian Climate Change Office, giving a dynamic presentation covering, amongst other things, myths about global warming. Dianne Fowler, a Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association Director took the audience on a journey through rural communities of Tasmania and the challenges faced in a changing climate.

Dr Melissa Nursey-Bray from the University of Tasmania / Australian Maritime College discussed planning for climate change at the local level, while Stephen Wilson presented information on Tasmania’s climate future. The afternoon was spent mapping a vision and setting strategic priorities and actions for Local Government and for LGAT. In the short-term, LGAT will produce a summary paper from the workshop and establish action groups to aid in the development of a Climate Change Action Pack. The pack will provide information and tools to councils, with the aim of boosting their capacity to tackle climate change. The pack will also assist councils in engaging with their communities in order to raise awareness about what individuals can do in their daily lives to reduce their carbon footprint.

For more information, or to be a part of the Local Governments’ response to climate change, email Christine Materia at LGAT at christine.materia@lgat.tas.gov.au.
Raising the Profile of Tasmania’s Threatened Flora

CATRIONA SCOTT, THREATENED PLANT ACTION GROUP COORDINATOR

Tasmania is home to a diverse array of endangered, vulnerable and rare plants, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. While most Tasmanians have heard of our iconic threatened fauna species, such as the Wedge-Tailed Eagle and the Tasmanian devil, few people can name a threatened plant, and many would be surprised to discover that over 70% of species listed under Tasmania’s Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 are actually plants.

With almost 500 plant species listed as threatened in Tasmania, our threatened flora includes beautiful and unique species, ranging from grasses, herbaceous perennials and annuals, ferns and orchids through to large trees such as the Miena cider gum.

Threatened species occur throughout the landscape - in all habitats and on all land tenures. Many of our threatened flora species are found in unlikely places - along road verges, amongst graves in cemeteries and near rubbish tips. Many are small, inconspicuous and easily missed - hidden treasures growing amidst introduced grasses and invasive weeds. Some species listed as threatened may have always occurred in populations of small size and limited distributions, while others have suffered significant decline in both population size and habitat range since the European settlement of Tasmania. The conversion of native vegetation to agricultural land, urban development, altered fire regimes, weed invasion, grazing and soil compaction by introduced animals, altered hydrology, Phytophthora (an introduced plant pathogen) infestation, and habitat loss or degradation, are all factors which have contributed to the decline of many native plant species.

Once threatened, species require appropriate management to ensure their continued survival in the wild. Ongoing monitoring and surveying of populations allows staff from the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) to identify appropriate recovery actions in relation to a species’ life history, population size and range, habitat, and imminent threats. In some cases it’s as simple as fencing a population to keep stock from grazing the species, or removing invasive weeds from a species’ habitat. Other species require more complex management, such as implementing appropriate fire or disturbance regimes. In cases where a species is deemed particularly at threat ex situ, conservation plantings may be established, using seed collected from wild populations.

The Wildcare Threatened Plant Action Group (TPAG), formed in August 2007, provides the wider community with the opportunity to be directly involved in threatened flora recovery efforts, in close partnership with staff from DPIW’s Threatened Species Section. Over the past six months TPAG volunteers have been involved in implementing recovery actions in a number of threatened species habitats and populations. These include: eradicating invasive weeds from native grassland remnants at Tunbridge and Brighton; and in the vulnerable Callitris oblonga (South Esk Pine) habitat; hand pollinating flowers of the critically endangered Tetratheca gunnii (Shy Susan); searching for threatened orchids; and establishing conservation plantings of the endangered Eucalyptus gunnii subsp. divaricata (Miena cider gum).

If you would like to be involved in the conservation of Tasmania’s unique and precious threatened flora, contact Threatened Plant Action Group Coordinator, Catriona Scott, on 6233 6692 or email threatenedplantactiongroup@gmail.com.
Hobart City Council - Building a Sustainable Community

The completion of the Hobart City Council’s annual greenhouse gas emission inventory has revealed a 75% emission reduction since 1996, and a 1% community emission reduction in Hobart’s municipal area.

The reduction has been achieved in spite of an increase in Tasmania’s emissions factor for electricity, which has increased from 0.00 in 2001 to 0.13 in 2007, due to the impact of drought, low dam storages and increased importation of electricity from Victoria, which has a higher proportion of electricity generated through brown coal. Hobart’s greenhouse gas emission reductions have been achieved through capture and cogeneration of landfill gas methane from McRobies Gully and cogeneration at the Macquarie Point Sewage Treatment Plant. These have also contributed to emission reductions in the community sector along with other Council initiatives.

A further initiative of the Council has, through heat exchangers, been to extract heat from sewage effluent flowing from the Self’s Point Sewage Treatment facility and using that heat to advantage at the Hobart Aquatic Centre in the order of $120k per annum, thereby reducing the amount of electricity used at that site. Council is also investigating with Aurora trialling of tri-phosphour fluorescent and compact fluorescent street lights which will further reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Another popular initiative has been Council’s Solar Rebate Scheme, with approvals for more than 70 solar rebates for the installation of solar hot water systems on residential houses.

At the corporate level the Council has recently formed an internal Energy Management Team that is actively reviewing energy use across the Council that will include audits of lighting in buildings, investigation of alternative energy opportunities and working to raise awareness amongst Council’s employees. Council is also reviewing its Greenhouse Local Action Plan which will include actions to meet its commitment to zero corporate emissions by 2020. It is envisaged that once opportunities to reduce energy use have been exhausted, emissions which can’t be reduced, will be offset through a carbon offset scheme.

Coffey International Limited is one of the top 300 companies on the Australian Stock Exchange. Operating for nearly 50 years, we have a range of specialist businesses working in the social and physical infrastructure markets. Collectively, we aim to improve the lives of world communities.

Our businesses use specialist knowledge to help manage and build safe and cost-effective infrastructure, including roads, dams, building and mine operations. They also help to ensure the environment is protected – while still allowing local communities to enjoy the benefits that modern development can bring.

Our specialist businesses – Coffey Geotechnics, Coffey Environments, Coffey Mining and Coffey Projects – are leaders and experts in their fields.

Coffey is passionate about creating a sustainable future for our magnificent state.

Contact us to find out how we can help you to create extraordinary outcomes.

Coffey Business Centre, 2 Melville Street Hobart 7000
T (+61) (3) 6108 0100
coffey.com
New Design Prize Celebrates Art from Industrial Waste

Beautiful porcelain-like dolls made from fine sawdust and wearing hand-made dresses have won the major prize in a new design competition promoting the use of industrial waste - the Bricolage Industrial Waste Design Prize.

The dolls were selected from a number of inventive and creative responses submitted from across the state to the prize which invited artists, designers, craftspeople and innovators to make an original, durable, marketable product from industrial wastes. The prize aims to encourage the establishment of small businesses to use previously unwanted materials and to divert materials from landfill.

Current estimates suggest that commercial and industrial waste contributes to about 30% of the total waste stream. Of this, it is estimated that less than 40% is recycled. It is hoped the prize and the exhibition will encourage industry and the wider community to think more about using unwanted materials as a valuable resource.

Environment Protection Authority Board Announced

The State Government has announced the inaugural board of Tasmania’s Environment Protection Authority (EPA), which came into effect on 1 July to act as a strong and independent regulator for the state.

The new EPA will be governed by a skills-based board, chaired by John Ramsay. The board’s Deputy Chairperson is Hobart Water CEO, Dr Christine Mucha, who will be joined by environmental engineering and natural resource management consultant, Wayne Petras, and Ian Abernathy of the Launceston City Council who brings valuable experience in Local Government strategy, development and planning.

Director of Environmental Management, Warren Jones, will be the Director of the EPA.

Both the Board and the EPA Director will exercise power at arm’s length from State Government and have independent statutory powers. The board is responsible for a number of higher-level decisions, including the assessment of development proposals, while the Director exercises those powers that are needed for day-to-day regulatory management. The EPA’s roles and functions span environmental management and pollution control, and are established by the Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994.
Major Grant Puts Hobart Water Innovation Front and Centre

DR CHRISTINE MUCHA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Hobart Water

The recent news that Hobart Water has been awarded a $95,000 grant by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) to develop new technology was not only exciting for us, but has wide-reaching implications for the water sector.

The grant will be used to fund hardware and develop new software to meet BoM’s reporting requirements and integrate water quality and flow data currently stored by Hobart Water for the greater Hobart region. This has been triggered by newly legislated requirements. Under the Water Act 2007, the Commonwealth Government has broadened BoM’s role to collect and distribute water data nationally so Australia’s water resources are better managed.

BoM has now been authorised to not only collect but also publish high-quality water information. Publications will include a National Water Account and periodic reports on water resource use and availability. The bureau will also be empowered to set and implement national standards for water information. BoM has requested all water authorities and larger councils provide key water quality and flow information to them. This includes Hobart Water, where we have a large amount of data stored as databases, files and spreadsheets.

If challenges create opportunities, Hobart Water - like many other water authorities - felt challenged by the new requirements to supply water quality data on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to the BoM. This is in addition to our ongoing requirement to continue supplying data to the National Water Initiative (NWI), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Primary Industry and Water, just to name a few.

While it might be tempting to think of this as an additional impost on our daily resources, we clearly saw the benefits that would flow from greater integration of our separate sources of data into automated reporting systems.

With the news that Hobart Water was one of 92 national organisations to be awarded a BoM grant under the Modernisation and Extension of Hydrologic Monitoring Systems Programme, the opportunity emerged to develop an innovative new system. In essence, it funds the purchase of vitally needed hardware, together with the development of new software. Working with local IT data specialist Chris Misson, who developed Hobart Water’s previous water quality data monitoring systems, Hobart Water will create an automated system to collate and deliver information to the BoM from a range of sources in relevant formats.

This project, which we hope to commission over the coming months, has a range of benefits. As well as saving us considerable resources in delivering the information, the new system could offer significant benefits to a larger water and wastewater business covering all of southern Tasmania. In the future, the system will enable its operators to create water balance sheets and water accounts - essential tools for good asset management and planning.

What this means is that data being collected will not only help build a national picture, it will also help build an integrated picture of which areas need help and when. It will give water authorities and responsible government departments a strong basis for making good decisions about water infrastructure.

So how useful will this be to other authorities? While there may be intellectual property (IP) issues to unravel, the fact is that Hobart Water has taken the lead in developing a system which can potentially help other utilities. If not with the actual system, then certainly by sharing the knowledge we gain in developing this innovation.
New Mulcher to Drastically Reduce Landfill

Barwicks Landscape Supplies at Mornington has a new, highly innovative, environmentally-friendly mulcher, which will drastically reduce the amount of wood waste and scrap metal that ends up in landfills in Tasmania.

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism supported the development of the new waste management and recycling service through a $50,000 grant. The new Magnum Force mulcher can process wood waste, tyres and scrap metal, and is the first of its kind in Tasmania. It will result in 90% of the wood waste Barwicks currently deals with being recycled rather than going to landfill.

The heavy duty magnets fitted to the mulcher separate large pieces of metal from the timber, which is then recycled and sold. It produces recycled products, such as wood waste, garden mulch and scrap metals, which can then be sold to supply industry with much-needed materials. Barwicks estimates that the new service will result in six new jobs and will increase sales by over $1.5 million within two years.

[(From L-R) Norm Mcilfatrick, Secretary of the Department of Economic Development and Paula Wriedt, Minister for Economic Development and Tourism, pictured with the new mulcher]

Hobart Revamps Popular Water Conservation Rebate Scheme

Hobart City Council has approved the updating of its popular Water Conservation Rates Rebate scheme, providing an opportunity for those Hobart residents that make an effort in relation to water conservation to be rewarded.

Council has now approved the updated scheme, with increased rebates for rainwater tanks and toilet cistern replacements for non-residential properties. A major benefit is that the $300 rebate for rainwater tanks connected to the toilet has been increased to a $400 rebate, where it has been extended to include supplying water to a clothes washing machine.

The re-launching of the Water Conservation Rebate Scheme in mid 2007 received widespread interest throughout the municipality. So far, more than 250 rebate applications have been received, with the Council handing out more than $20,000 in rates rebates.

While the simple act of upgrading a single flush cistern to a dual flush unit may seem of little significance, national figures have shown this can save in excess of 40,000 litres of valuable drinking water every year for the average family household. Upgrading a top loading washing machine to a front loading unit of the same make and size can save more than 50,000 litres per year.

With communities now providing a stronger focus on local environments and the increasing concern of people’s impacts on sustainable living standards, Council’s rebate scheme offers the chance to make a difference. While Hobart ratepayers are making a contribution to a sustainable environment, they can benefit by receiving a reward on their rates.

For further information contact the Hobart City Council on 6238 2980, or visit www.hobartcity.com.au.
King Island Businesses Embrace Sustainable Future

Minister for Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts, Michelle O’Byrne and King Island Mayor Charles Arnold recently launched the King Island Sustainable Futures program at Currie, aiming to provide an opportunity for enterprises to rethink the way their businesses impact on King Island.

Almost 40% of businesses on King Island have adopted a new program to reduce their environmental impacts and capture a larger slice of the tourism market. About 30 King Island enterprises, including the Council and the local school, are aiming to reduce their use of energy, water and materials plus cut operating expenses by a least $500 each year. They have signed on to the 12-month program to focus on their resource efficiency performance and to examine better ways of using resources to help minimise operating costs and the production of waste.

The State Government is committed to maintaining Tasmania’s clean, green reputation and is co-funding the program through its CleanBiz program, which is designed to help Tasmanian enterprises benefit from resource efficient practices. The program is the result of CleanBiz, King Island Council, National Foods and Hydro Tasmania coming together to help create a grass roots initiative to stimulate and progress new ideas and to educate local enterprises about the concepts of sustainability.

King Island makes a valuable contribution to the Tasmanian economy, particularly in the agricultural sector. Beef, dairy and kelp products from King Island are well regarded nationally and internationally, and Island enterprises can all benefit from engaging with this sustainable business management program. King Island Sustainable Futures will boost the renowned King Island brand to help grow not only exports but visitor numbers to the island. It is hoped the program will also help to refresh and sow new business relationships that enable enterprises to better coordinate and optimise particular processes or activities, such as those relating to purchasing and supply chain management.

King Island Sustainable Futures will also help reduce the island’s impact on climate change and give them an extra measure of control with respect to energy, water and material costs.

Tasmanian Action to Target Government Emissions

The State Government has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050 and has established a new Tasmanian Climate Action Council.

Immediate measures to cut emissions, include a carbon neutral government fleet by 2010, carbon neutral government air travel with investment in Tasmanian-based carbon offsets through Greening Australia’s Breathe Easy program, and a move to energy efficient, solar powered government buildings.

The framework for reducing government emissions was designed by Dr Kate Crowley, an environmental policy academic in the School of Government at the University of Tasmania. Dr Crowley is also Chair of the Tasmanian Environment Industry Council, a member of the Tasmania Together Progress Board and now the inaugural Chair of the Tasmanian Climate Action Council.

Dr Crowley’s framework is based upon the need for urgent and sustained action for the State Government to actually cut emissions, in very public fashion, and in a way that models action for industry and for the broader community. Tasmania will be the first state government in Australia to map and reduce its own carbon footprint.

The framework includes an audit of the Government’s greenhouse gas emissions, setting targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, monitoring and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions, agency action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a cultural change process for the public sector, and evaluation and review processes to learn from and legitimise the project. The Tasmanian Climate Action Council will advise on further actions to help meet the 60% target.

Trial Smashes Glass Recycling Ceiling

The Melbourne Qantas Club lounge welcomes between 5,000 and 7,000 members each day. And, when a Qantas Club member wants a beer, around 90% of those members choose to drink beer from a bottle rather than a tap.

As a result, each day the Qantas Club ends up with thousands and thousands of empty bottles. Despite the best efforts of bar staff to recycle waste, in some cases as little as 10% of glass is recycled from the hospitality industry in Australia because of contamination and restrictions with the recycling process. The remaining glass ends up in landfill.

Passionate Qantas Club staff wanted to discover a better way. The Melbourne Qantas Club was committed to stopping packaging waste and making bottle disposal easier for staff. Staff were aware that a large amount of packaging was passing through the doors and questioned where it was going, horrified that it might be ending up in landfill. One of the things they looked at was the way the beer was packaged.

Beer is generally sent in cardboard six packs, in cardboard slabs and each bottle has a cap. In addition, wine bottles, cordial containers, juice bottles and so forth revealed that the actual amount of packaging being thrown away could be substantial. The Melbourne Qantas Club joined forces with the Qantas Property team and discovered a machine called a ‘BottleCycler’ which crushes bottles on site to a consistent size for recycling, increasing previous glass recycling rates from 10% to 80%.

Further investigation led the team to an Australian first trial in Melbourne funded by the National Packaging Covenant and the Packaging Stewardship Forum, and supported by Melbourne City Council, which offered hospitality venues a free, two-month trial to use the BottleCycler machine. The Qantas Club Lounge enthusiastically took up the offer and since August 2007, the BottleCycler at the Club has processed more than 361,000 bottles or 72.2 tonnes, resulting in 72,000 kilograms of glass diverted from landfill.

The Qantas Group is a National Packaging Covenant signatory* which means they sign and agree to certain responsibilities to stop packaging ending up in landfill. In Australia, more than 80% of all packaged retail brands sold are Covenant signatories - packing a powerful punch towards packaging sustainability.

The National Packaging Covenant currently funds more than 50 projects across Australia with a total cost of $47 million, which identify better ways to recycle, reuse or stop packaging ending up in landfill. These projects have the potential to divert 500,000 tonnes of consumer packaging from landfill.

*Companies, government agencies and industry associations sign the Covenant and commit to certain responsibilities to stop packaging ending up in landfill. Brand owners have the choice to either join the Covenant or agree to Covenant responsibilities or face state packaging legislation.

---

Foxes are not welcome in Tasmania. Since January, 9 fox scats have been confirmed from the following areas: Gladstone 2, Spreyton 2, Campbell Town 2, Oatlands 2 and Seymour 1. Such areas are the focus of ongoing monitoring and/or 1080 baiting programs by the Fox Eradication Program.

We encourage all members of the Tasmanian community to remain vigilant for evidence of foxes. On the mainland, foxes are breeding during winter and, in Tasmania, foxes may similarly be active in seeking and calling for mates during this time.

Please report all fox sightings or any possible evidence of fox activity to the 24hr hotline: 1300 FOX OUT (13 00 369 688)

Information about the Fox Eradication Program, latest evidence and identifying signs of fox activity, including different types of fox calls, is available from the Fox Eradication Program by phoning (03) 6336 5320, emailing Fox.Enquiries@dpiw.tas.gov.au or visiting the website www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/fox
Revised Water Scheme Awarded for Environmental Excellence

Clarence City Council has won a prestigious Tasmanian Award for Environmental Excellence for the Clarence Recycled Water Scheme. The Local Government Award recognised the scheme as setting a new benchmark in environmental protection and preservation, while encouraging responsible regional development. The scheme, which was also named the overall winner of the 2007 Local Government Awards for Excellence, diverts treated effluent from the Derwent estuary to irrigation, has the potential to free up hundreds of litres of mains water, and protects sensitive native habitat and aquaculture industries.

Improving the Health of the Tamar

The State Government is providing $250,000 to assist with the strategic long-term management of the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER). The TEER program recognises that the health of the Tamar Estuary is linked to waterways in the upper Tamar catchments, with a ‘catchment to coast’ management approach. It will help to provide coordinated management and guide strategic investment in activities that protect, maintain and enhance the Tamar and Esk Rivers. Nearly half of the TEER funding will be directly provided to assist the Launceston City Council’s review of the ongoing dredging program and studies into management options for sediment in the upper Tamar Estuary. The TEER Program is a voluntary regional partnership between Natural Resource Management North, Local Government, and the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts.

Launceston Approves Carbon Offset Project

Launceston City Council has given the green light to a three-year carbon offset project at Hoblers Bridge Reserve on the banks of the North Esk River. The initiative, a partnership between Council, the State Government’s Private Forests Division and the local community, will see 12 hectares of the reserve, currently vegetated with grass and weed species, turned into a major urban forest as a carbon offset promotion site. The amount of carbon captured will be calculated over time and posted on Council’s website. The 12 hectares of plantation will account for the annual emissions of 60 cars, which is significant in terms of a contribution towards offsetting emissions from Council’s light vehicle fleet.

Motorists Urged to Help Protect Tasmanian Devil

The Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources (DIER) has installed new road signs on the Forestier Peninsula, alerting motorists to Tasmanian devils in the area to help reduce the risk of devils being killed on the road. The Forestier Peninsula has a significant Tasmanian devil population and is one of very few locations with the potential to be isolated from other areas where devils have been infected with the Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease. The aim is to reduce the level of disease in the region and keep it in check, assisting the ongoing survival of functioning populations of devils in the Forestier-Tasman Peninsula landscape. When The Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources became aware that a number of devils had been killed on the road in recent months, new signage was placed between Dunalley and Eaglehawk Neck, alerting motorists that Tasmanian devils are about and advising a reduced speed between dusk and dawn when devils are most active. People travelling on the roads after dark are encouraged to take particular care.

Save Time, Money and Water

A new, environmentally friendly, biodegradable product is now available that has the potential to save councils time, money and importantly, water. Hydrocell, a soil enhancer, aerator and growth promoter, results in faster, stronger and healthier plant growth, holds water and nutrients for much longer in the soil, and makes water and nutrients readily available to plants under any conditions, therefore improving drought tolerance. The use of Hydrocell also has the capacity to extend the intervals between irrigation applications, cutting labour and watering time by at least 50%. In addition, the product is suitable for use with grey water systems. For further details, visit www.fytogreen.com.au/products/hydrocell/commercialhome.html.