April 2008

An electronic update for Local Government on NRM and environmental policies, projects and events in Tasmania

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If you have any queries about the content of this newsletter, or ideas for contributions to future newsletters, please contact me on the details below...

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On March 14 the Australian Government announced the new Caring for Our Country initiative, which will deliver, $2.25 million over five years to local communities. Caring for Our Country replaces a number of programs, with impacts for Local Government.

The Australian Government has announced they will be replacing the National Local Government Facilitator network with one National Local Government Coordinator based in Canberra. This Coordinator will assist all Australia’s 673 Councils develop partnerships across the whole community.

Local Government is the closest sphere of government to the community and plays a key role in environmental and natural resource management throughout Australia. The loss of the network may have serious ramifications on the delivery of the six priority areas of the Caring for our Country in particular the goal of community skills, knowledge and engagement. Further impacts may been seen in relation to local governments’ capacity to deliver future climate change and environmental protection agendas in Tasmania.


Projects

Natural Resource Management is Everyone’s Business!

By Rocky Sainty, ILMF, Tasmania

Recently in Tasmania we signed the first Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA) in Australia, which has themes such as: partnership building for delivery of NRM outcomes; capacity building and institutional change; and engagement of the Aboriginal community in NRM. This RPA takes the form of a multi-year agreement, includes three tiers of government, private sector investment and will be current until February 2011. In simple terms the RPA demonstrates that NRM is everyone’s business and that an agreement engaging a number of players can be achieved.

So what’s the project all about? This is a simple model that involves teams of young people from Community undertaking training in conservation and land management, supported by TAFE. The difference is they are then moved into 6 month long work placements to build on what they have learnt in class and experience life in the conservation and land management workplace. A coordinator for the project looks after each team as they go through training and liaises with government and private sector to secure the work placements. The aim is a long term one – to get more Aboriginal people managing Aboriginal land by increasing skills and building new partnerships.
And the process? It took a solid year of work from a dedicated project team to get this agreement finalised. The initial negotiations to get investors on-board were slow but as they say ‘money follows money’. In the end we have pulled together a wide number of investors to work on this project including, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, Tasmanian Government (Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal Heritage Office, DPIW, Parks and Wildlife), Australian Government (Centrelink, DEEWR, DEWHA, FaHCSIA), TAFE Tasmania, Local Government Association of Tasmania, NRM South and from the private sector, Hydro Tasmania.

And the take home messages? Remember NRM is everyone’s business and there are so many people that can participate in developing and delivering NRM outcomes. The trick is to get everyone working together. Find a champion, establish your network, keep communication channels open and informed and keep the messages clear. I can be contacted at rocky.sainty@dpiw.tas.gov.au or on 0417 016 598 for more information.

Caring for Our Country

Caring for Our Country provides $2.25 billion in funding over five years from 1 July 2008 to June 2013. It will integrate a number of existing natural resource management measures into a consolidated program.

The Caring for our Country program will deliver funding to local communities through a ‘one-stop shop’ covering the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Landcare, Environmental Stewardship and Working on Country programs. The program will focus on the key goals of a healthier environment, which is better-protected, well-managed and more resilient against the challenges of climate change.

It will invest in projects which match six national priorities:
- Australia’s national reserve system;
- Biodiversity and natural icons (including weeds, feral animals and threatened species);
- Coasts and aquatic habitats;
- Sustainable farm practices and Landcare;
- Natural resource management in remote and northern Australia; and
- Community skills, knowledge and engagement.

Regional natural resource management organisations will be supported by $636 million as secure base-level funding to invest in actions that complement and contribute to the Australian Government’s national priorities over the life of the program. They will be able to bid for additional funds from the program to undertake activities that will help achieve the Australian Government's desired outcomes.

Delivery

Caring for Our Country will take a business approach to investment. This means the Commonwealth Government will:
- be explicit about what outcomes we intend to achieve;
- direct our funding to achieve those outcomes;
- choose the most efficient and effective ways of taking action and the organisations that are best placed to deliver;
- keep on track by setting short one to three year targets;
- simplify and streamline administration;
- be accountable to our stakeholders for our actions and achievements; and
- focus on achieving results and reducing red tape.

The program will remove the restrictions imposed on 'national', 'regional' and 'local' level funding and provide the opportunity for non-government organisations, regional bodies, Local Government and State, Territory and Australian Government agencies to access a greater proportion of program funds to help achieve our national priorities. It will release a business plan each year inviting proposals from relevant organisations and partnerships to undertake activities that will achieve outcomes against the priority areas. The Australian Government will release the first Caring for our Country Business Plan, covering the 2009-10 financial year, in September 2008. This will:
- identify outcomes for the five years of the Program against each of the national priority areas for investment;
- outline the first series of short-term targets to achieve these outcomes; and
- invite proposals for activities to deliver investments against these priorities and targets.
Transition from NHT to Caring for Our Country

The new strategic approach and streamlined delivery systems will be progressively introduced during 2008-09. Transitional arrangements will minimise disruption during the changeover from the old programs. The program will reduce the administrative burden on stakeholders and investment partners. It will better, and more transparently, measure investment progress and outcomes. There will be a single point of entry. This will be accessible throughout Australia via a secure internet portal and a toll-free telephone number. All information, funding, contracting and reporting will be standardised.

The program includes funds to implement election commitments to:

- rescue the Great Barrier Reef;
- repair our fragile coastal ecosystems;
- save the endangered Tasmanian Devil;
- improve water quality in the Gippsland Lakes;
- fight the Cane Toad menace;
- employ additional Indigenous Rangers;
- expand the Indigenous Protected Area network; and
- assist Indigenous Australians enter the carbon trading market.

The program will complement the $130 million Australia’s Farming Future initiative, which will ensure the primary industry sector has a sustainable future in a changing climate.

Further information is available at www.nrm.gov.au

Events and Awards

World Environment Day Award

The Award Categories for the 2008 World Environment Day Awards are:

- Building Commission award for best sustainable residential development ~ demonstrating innovative and environmentally friendly building practices.
- Sustainability Victoria Meeting the Greenhouse Challenge Award ~ Excellence in the implementation of innovative strategies for greenhouse gas reduction.
- Lincolne Scott Triple Bottom Line Awards ~ for environmental, social and commercial best practice program for business.
- Business Sustainability Awards ~ best specific environmental initiative; and environmental best practice program
- Local Government Awards ~ excellence in overall environmental management, best specific environmental initiative
- Szencorp Green Building Award ~ best non-industrial building project that has demonstrated excellence in the implementation of innovative eco-sustainable solutions in our cities.
- DSE Excellence in Marine and Coastal Management Award ~ best company, organisation, community or individual that has demonstrated excellence in marine and coastal management.
- Excellence in Sustainable Water Management Award ~ best company, organisation, individual or community group that has demonstrated excellence in water management, in either rural or urban regions.
- ITW Industrial Packaging Education/School Award ~ best School based project exploring environmental themes or issues.
- Community Award ~ best community environmental project or initiative
- Individual Award ~ outstanding service to the environment
- Media Award for Environmental Reporting ~ excellence in environmental reporting

More information including nomination forms is available at http://www.unaavictoria.org.au/pages/home.php
Banksia Awards

The Prime Minister's Environmentalist of the Year Award (supported by the Australian Government) celebrates an individual or group of national significance.

New for 2008 is the inaugural Environment Minister's Young Environmentalist of the Year Award (supported by the Australian Government) which is open to individuals aged from 15 to 26 and aims to encourage, publicise and inspire those fellow Australians who will be inspiring the generation to follow.

The Mercedes-Benz Australian Environmental Research Award (supported by Mercedes-Benz Australia/Pacific Pty Ltd) is awarded for the all important research and development, a valuable source for new ideas that will take us into the future - this award attracts a $30,000 payment for the Winner.

The Banksia Category Awards comprise ten separate Awards, which focus on areas such as Land & Biodiversity and Water; action taken such as in Education and those undertaking the task as Community Groups, Local Government etc. The Category Award Entry Kit provides you with all technical specifications and includes the criteria for all of the ten awards:

1) Education ~ development and delivery of educational programs: that addressed and contributed to the protection, enhancement and sustainability of the environment.
2) Water ~ protection, conservation or enhancement of: Australia's freshwater resources and marine environments.
3) Land & Biodiversity ~ protection and enhancement of land systems, soil and biodiversity, at a species or ecosystem level.
4) Indigenous ~ ‘Caring for country’ by or with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals.
5) Community ~ leadership, commitment and excellence in the protection and enhancement of the environment as demonstrated by an individual and/or community groups.
6) Local Government ~ development and implementation of environmentally sustainable initiatives by a local government authority.
7) Business sustainability ~ the significant reduction of the environmental footprint and the incorporation of social responsibility initiatives by a company, organisation or business.
8) Built Environment ~ buildings, development infrastructure, services, technologies and products in the built environment incorporating significant sustainable development principles and practices.
9) ECO Innovation ~ products, services, designs and new business models that achieved new efficiencies and/or reductions in energy, materials, resources and waste from a lifecycle perspective.
10) Climate ~ reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and/or adaptation to, or mitigation of, the impacts of climate change.

Entry in Environment Minister's Young Environmentalist of the Year Award Closes 19 May 2008

Wollemi Pine Tree Offer

Landcare Australia and Wollemi Australia are offering every group registered on the National Landcare/Coastcare Directory a ‘dinosaur tree’ – the renowned Wollemi Pine which was once thought to be extinct.

The Wollemi Pine is one of the world’s oldest and rarest trees – less than 100 exist today in the wild. The successful cultivation of the Wollemi is a great success story for Australia, and a fitting thank you to all the Landcare and Coastcare groups out there, every day, making a difference.

In the spirit of Landcare, each Wollemi should be used for public display or planting on a project site, or to assist in the promotion of their project or encouraging new members to join (and for those who are wondering, despite being very rare, the tree is very hardy!). (Visit www.wollemipine.com for details on caring for and planting the trees.

To be eligible for a free tree your group must be registered on the Landcare Australia Landcare directory at www.landcareonline.com/directory

Once you have registered for the directory online, you may go to one of the three nurseries below to pick up a tree. If you are already registered on the directory, you can pick up a tree anytime. There are a limited number of trees available.

News
Bruny Bio-Region

The Final Recommendations Report (See: http://www.rpdc.tas.gov.au/plu/inquiries/bruny_bioregion_inquiry/mpa_bruny_bioregion_inquiry_-_reportspublications) was released publicly by the Minister on Monday 17 March, noting that the Government will not be agreeing to any recommendations that restrict or prevent traditional fishing activities of recreational or commercial fishers.

The Tasmanian Marine Protected Areas Strategy provides for public consultation on the Final Recommendations Report. The period for public consultation will extend to Wednesday 16 April 2008. It is important to have your say in the future sustainability of our marine environment. Alongside the public consultation process the DPIW will be reviewing the RPDC recommendations and preparing the final report which will recommend areas for proclamation and their classification status for consideration by Cabinet.

Comments are open until Wednesday 16th April 2008. They must be in writing and addressed to the Secretary, Department of Primary Industries and Water, GPO Box 44 Hobart 7001. You can also lodge your comments and submissions by fax on 03 6223 1539 or email at Fishing.Enquiries@dpiw.tas.gov.au.

What’s New – The Butt Littering Trust

The Trust’s mission is to be Australia’s recognised leading organisation on butt littering reduction and provider of ButtFree Solutions to reduce cigarette butt littering. The Trust has set up its new head office in Melbourne. More info is available at 0423 254 313 or email at executivedirector@buttlitteringtrust.org.

Sea Level Rise and Planning Guidelines

The Antarctic & Climate Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC) is developing new ways to integrate sea level rise figures into planning guidelines. Using sea-level data from 29 locations around Australia, the results show that if sea level rises by 0.5 metres - still a conservative estimate given recent observations - events that now happen every few years could potentially happen every year within one or two decades and every few days in 2100. The ACE CRC research provides a new basis for planning decisions through the 21st century as sea level continues to rise. The results give planners, engineers and policymakers a way of estimating the probability that a given sea level will be exceeded during any prescribed period. Read more about sea level rise at http://www.acecrc.org.au/drawpage.cgi?pid=publications.

Source: Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC)

Car Pool Tasmania

Tassie’s car pool has arisen out of the hot earth and the abundance of empty automobiles exchanging glances on our increasingly busy Tasmanian roads. The drivers of these automobiles would like to coordinate together and share fuel costs (now hitting around AUD$1.48/L), to save a couple of dollars whilst doing their bit for lessening road congestion, and CO2 emissions.

Tasmania’s First and only Specialised State wide Online Carpooling Site provides a site to connect drivers and passengers in Tasmania to reduce fuel costs, CO2 emissions and congestion on our roads; to encourage positive social interaction and environmental action. More information or to get into the pool is available at http://www.carpooltasmania.blogspot.com/.

For the Children

Do you want to make the earth a cleaner place to live? How can you help to protect the air, water, and land? Find out by visiting http://www.epa.gov/safewater/kids/flash/flash_watercycle.html.
Conferences

Clean Energy Conference 2008, 14th & 15th April, Sydney
Clean Energy will present many world first leading examples of clean energy case studies, recent implementations, trials and those at the cutting edge of deploying clean energy technologies. To see the full program and registration details, click HERE.

Kyoto: Policy in Practice Conference, 7 - 8 May 2008, Sydney
The Kyoto: Policy in Practice Conference will comprehensively cover the economic impact of the Kyoto Protocol on Australia's booming economy. The impressive speaker faculty will give you answers on how going green will affect your organisation. Further information is available at www.iir.com.au/kyoto

THE VICTORIAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE, 2008
Victorian Sustainability Conference, 22-23 April 2008, Melbourne
The Victorian Sustainable Development Conference 2008 will provide an opportunity to examine progress towards sustainable objectives in a range of key areas such as: energy efficiency, climate change response, waste and resource recovery, planning and urban design, water. A conference agenda is available at www.halledit.com.au/conferences/sustainability/2008 or by contacting Denise McQueen on (03) 8534 5021 or denise.mcqueen@halledit.com.au

Coast to Coast 2008 conference, 18-22 August, Darwin
Coast to Coast is Australia's biennial national coastal conference, which aims to focus debate, discussion and learning across the full range of coastal and marine issues - at the international, national, regional, state and local levels. The theme of the Coast to Coast 2008 conference is 'Coast to Coast Collaboration: Crossing Boundaries'. Details of Coast to Coast 2008 can be found at http://www.coast2coast.org.au