New Household Chemical Drop-off Service Launched

For the first time, Tasmanians have the opportunity to safely and responsibly dispose of household chemicals, with the official launch of the Chemsafe Homes Tasmania program.

The State Government has teamed up with local councils to help Tasmanians remove potentially dangerous, unwanted and out-of-date chemical products from their homes and deposit them at a free drop-off site. The Chemsafe Homes Tasmania program was launched on 20 October by the Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage, Michelle O’Byrne, and Local Government Association of Tasmania President Barry Easther.

Anyone with unwanted household chemicals can visit the nearest of ten designated drop-off points around the state on the assigned day. Details of the drop off points and disposal rules have been outlined in a ChemSafe Homes Tasmania brochure, which has been delivered to every Tasmanian household.

Chemicals accepted at the drop-off sites include most garden, kitchen, laundry, shed and garage chemicals including fuels, oils, lubricants, paints, thinner, solvents and poisons. Environmental benefits are expected through the increased resource recovery, treatment and correct disposal of household hazardous waste, and diversion of such waste from entering landfills, wastewater systems and the environment.

The program is jointly funded by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment and Tasmania’s 29 councils. It is supported by the Southern Waste Strategy Authority, the Cradle Coast Waste Management Group and the Northern Tasmania Regional Waste Management Group.

A copy of the brochure may be obtained from www.lgat.tas.gov.au, or from your local council. For pre-recorded information about the service, phone 1800 857 002.

Waste Management Group and the Northern Tasmania Regional Waste Management Group.

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Council Carbon Emissions Come Under Scrutiny

CHRISTINE MATERIA, LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY OFFICER
Local Government Association of Tasmania

The Local Government Carbon Emission Reduction Program recently presented its first round of regional workshops in Launceston, Burnie and Hobart.

The workshops targeted key senior managers within councils who are working with the energy and greenhouse data and reports, and focused on capacity building within councils, providing participants with the tools required to obtain maximum benefit from the reports and data.

The workshops covered the Statewide Partnership Agreement on Climate Change and provided participants with hands-on examples of how to apply the greenhouse and energy reports operationally and strategically within councils to achieve ongoing environment and financial benefits.

Individual council reports were used as case studies to show how the information in the reports can be applied to improve the management of assets from an energy efficiency perspective and help streamline the management of utility accounts, resulting in significant financial savings to councils. The workshop demonstrated how the reports can be applied to environmental reports, greenhouse inventories, environmental action plans, and a large range of other environmental management and sustainability outcomes within council.

The feedback from the workshops was very positive, most notably, just how valuable the data and reports are in terms of identifying anomalies, where significant cost savings can be made to councils and where emissions can be reduced. Participants were also excited to learn that their Council’s performance was being benchmarked (organisation and key properties) against other cities, municipalities, counties and shires - regionally, nationally and internationally.

Further information on the program is available by contacting Christine Materia at christine.materia@lgat.tas.gov.au.

Veolia Environmental Services provides a full range of waste management, resource recovery, environmental and industrial services to councils across Tasmania.

Specialising in waste and recyclables collection, we work closely with local government and have assisted many Tasmanian councils to develop waste management solutions that meet local requirements.

Veolia can help design and implement collection systems for the entire recyclable and general waste streams.

Council-specific waste and resource management plans may incorporate options for resource recovery, waste minimisation strategies, hard and green waste services, collection and recycling services, as well as supporting education initiatives.
Clean, green and climate friendly

HOBART

It’s not easy being green, but Hobart City Council deserves its growing reputation for environmental sustainability. Here, the Council reveals some of the actions on climate change that it’s been taking for more than a decade and explains how these are making Hobart a better place to live.

The epithets ‘eco’, ‘green’ and ‘climate friendly’ are so over-used these days they’ve largely lost their meaning. So much claims to be ‘eco-aware’, ‘planet-wise’ or ‘environmentally friendly’, it has become hard to identify those things that really are doing best by our rapidly heating planet. For residents of a city like Hobart with its fresh air, bike paths, bush skyline and street trees, it’s easy to feel all is well in the world environmentally that this really is a ‘clean, green’ place to live. But the city might not be that way were it not for years of behind-the-scenes work by Hobart’s forward thinking City Council.

“It’s been more than 10 years since Hobart City Council committed itself to action on climate change,” says Lord Mayor Alderman Rob Valentine, “and it’s one of the hallmarks of the way this city is run.” Actions from corporate emissions reductions to bushland preservation, better transport options to ways of dealing with waste, have all helped Hobart become a more environmentally sustainable city and one that’s leading the nation in acting against climate change. Yet much of Hobart’s climate change action has happened out of sight, unknown to many of the city’s own residents.

Some impressive figures evidence Hobart’s climate change commitment. Minimisation of climate impact in the work of the City Council has allowed 70 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to date on 1996 levels. “This is a really significant figure,” says the Lord Mayor. “It’s an emission reduction equivalent to taking 38,823 cars off the road permanently or turning off all the street lights in Australia for 53 days”. The Council has committed to a further 30 per cent reduction on its remaining emissions by 2020 from 2010 levels.
Some of Council’s early major steps in emissions abatement have been the most innovative; like cogeneration technology at the McRobies Gully landfill where methane is converted to electricity and fed into the statewide grid reducing the site’s greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent. There was also the installation of a 140kWh cogeneration water treatment plant at Macquarie Point (now run by Southern Water) which burns methane emitted by sewerage to heat sewerage digesters, instead of using additional power. And perhaps few Tasmanians know that water heating at The Hobart Aquatic Centre, heating at the Federation Concert Hall and at a nearby aged care facility, also comes from heat exchange technology using heat sourced from a passing sewage main.

Hobart is also committed to becoming more climate friendly and more liveable as far as transport is concerned. Its Sustainable Transport Strategy aims to make the city more cycle-able, walk-able, and served by improved public transport.

Council has coordinated a bike network strategy with Cycling South, and has installed arterial bicycle lanes in the city to make bicycle commuting safer for riders. It’s also looking into ways to encourage walking. “We know from consultation with the community that people want to see Hobart as a pedestrian and cycle-friendly place,” says the Lord Mayor. Further pedestrianisation of the city centre is therefore being considered, as well as better linking the CBD to the water.

The City is considering preferential parking for commuters who car pool; a rapid transport system on the existing rail corridor through the northern suburbs, and also a ferry transport system on the River Derwent.

Hobart is unique in Australia in that over 60 per cent of the area managed by Council is bushland, the city’s green lung and carbon sink. The Council has long managed the city’s bushland and parks for conservation and amenity. Preserving the bushland skyline has helped make Hobart a city that is connected with the natural environment and aware of its environmental responsibility. Through its Bushcare program, the Council provides support for community groups removing invasive weeds and restoring native vegetation.

“Part of Council’s role, as the branch of government closest to the people, is to lead the community, and that includes in their efforts to cut their own greenhouse gas emissions,” says the Lord Mayor. To that end, the Council has taken a number of steps to help Hobartians to be more environmentally aware.

The Council has encouraged increased energy efficiency in households through its $500 solar hotwater rebate scheme, its landlord’s $300 insulation rebate, and its sustainable building design rebate, whereby planning fees are waived on energy efficient design. Council has also commissioned Sustainable Living Tasmania to deliver workshops like the Beat the Winter Chills and Bills sessions, which have helped educate and empower homeowners to take action on climate change by insulating and saving energy, while enjoying warmer homes in winter.
Some of Council’s community initiatives have received nation-wide attention like the Walking School Bus Project in conjunction with South Hobart Primary School and the Australian Greenhouse Office. This innovative project allows children to walk to school with the aid of parent volunteers along a safe route enabling both healthy exercise and a reduction in carbon emissions. The Australian Government produced a DVD of the project and distributed it to all schools Australia-wide as an ideal example of community-council-schools collaboration on climate change abatement.

The Council is also involved with the Hobart Sustainable Schools Initiative, working with MacKillop College to encourage participation in the National Solar Schools initiative.

Other projects less in the public eye make equally meaningful efforts towards greenhouse gas reductions; like Hobart adopting energy efficient street lighting, or, for example, making a 66 per cent reduction in energy usage through the refurbishment of the Town Hall Annex. The Council is currently also installing a wireless-controlled public lighting system at the Long Beach foreshore redevelopment offering significant energy savings and improved light.

"Council is continually trying to find ways to reduce its own carbon footprint, and help the community to do the same," says the Lord Mayor. “Our climate change actions need to be strategic, sustainable, and present at all levels of our organisation, and we need councils out there, promoting what they do.”

On a state and national level, the Council has certainly received recognition for its outstanding work against climate change. The Council won the Local Government Award in the 2009 Tasmanian Awards for Environmental Excellence. It was also a 2009 finalist in the prestigious Banksia Awards, Australia’s leading environmental awards. The Council’s entry was selected for People’s Choice Award nomination and Environmental Services and was one of only nine finalists from 42 entries nationwide.

Looking to the future for climate change action, in May 2009 Council released Hobart’s Climate Change Strategies x 5, aimed at strengthening and embedding action on climate change, further confirmation of its political commitment to leading in this sphere. The Council’s climate change and sustainability initiative has been endorsed by the Southern Tasmania Councils Authority which will further strengthen climate actions across the 12 Councils of Southern Tasmania.

And what of the climate change sceptics - those who believe that climate change has not yet been proven? As far as the Council is concerned, wherever one stands on the issue, reducing climate impact is still of benefit to the city and community. “Council does believe climate change is a significant issue,” says the Lord Mayor. “Looking at the science, we believe it’s definitely real.

Extreme weather events, droughts, floods and damaging winds along with storm surge and sea level rise are things that can impact on our city. Effects like these are real and imminent. If people are climate change sceptics, it doesn’t matter. What Council is doing is of benefit in any event. Reducing our carbon footprint actually saves money which is of benefit to the community. And being climate-aware also increases amenity and improves lifestyles. It’s definitely a win-win way of operating.”

With a decade of climate change action to its credit, and more climate work to come, Hobart can justifiably call itself a ‘climate friendly’ city - one that has environmentally-aware ways of operating at the top of its agenda. But happily, ‘climate friendly’ also means ‘people friendly’. What’s good for the planet is also good for the city habitat and its people.

“Hobart has been working toward reducing its carbon footprint for so long, it’s truly ingrained in the way the Council does things,” says the Lord Mayor. “Some might say what effect can little Hobart have on an issue that is a global one - but you need to start somewhere. Hobart can be proud of where it stands on climate change, and also proud of how its climate change actions make this city more liveable. Hobart is a clean, spacious, low-stress city, and a place that’s more closely connected with the natural environment than most cities in Australia.”

“Anything that can be done to enhance that, truly makes this a better place to live.”
Environmental Scorekeeping Results in Better Performance Outcomes

ANDREW WALES, MANAGING DIRECTOR
Planet Footprint

Tasmanian Councils are now over six months into the Local Government Carbon Emission Reduction Program which aims to achieve long-term improvement in energy and greenhouse performance through the development of a strong ‘scorekeeping’ framework for measuring, benchmarking, profiling and reporting the energy and greenhouse performance of councils.

Environmental scorekeeping is the process of continuously and independently measuring, benchmarking and reporting the energy and greenhouse performance of an organisation. Environmental scorekeeping is not the same as environmental auditing, or greenhouse inventory development. Audits and inventories are compiled only periodically (say annually) and are often completed in-house.

Environmental scorekeeping is continuous and independent, and ensures that performance in terms of consumption, costs and greenhouse emissions are being continuously tracked and made available for decision-making on demand.

By engaging an independent scorekeeping service, Tasmanian councils have on-demand access to an up-to-date and cost-effective environmental performance information rather than a disparate mix of consulting and engineering reports, in-house databases and spreadsheets often found in councils.

Councils who elect to use internal systems that involve software or spreadsheets, often find the ongoing data management requirements too time-consuming, they are unable to provide performance data quickly or continuously, or that the system withers as soon as there is a change of personnel. Dedicated employees end up spending valuable time measuring performance that could be put to better use on projects to improve that performance.

Carbon software may appear an attractive option, but it is generally expensive and still requires substantial input from council staff in terms of data entry and general management of the software. Most software options also provide limited or no strategic support to users as to how to apply the information effectively in the organisation to achieve performance improvement. Extravagant software-generated graphs and reports achieve little if they are not used by staff to improve performance.

Tasmanian councils have demonstrated an advanced understanding of these issues and have established an independent regime for monitoring, benchmarking and reporting energy and greenhouse performance of their operations. They have specifically engaged the Planet Footprint Environmental Scorekeeping Service to solve these problems. It provides more complete, consistent, up-to-date, comparable, independent and cost-effective information than they can get from consultants, software or in-house systems, with full support from environmental and sustainability advisers.

Through the Planet Footprint service, each council has continuous access to a range of on-demand reports and data extracts. These are designed by sustainability experts to ensure that councils have the information needed to make decisions and meet reporting obligations quickly and confidently.

The vast majority of data needed to measure performance is collected directly from energy and water utilities. Other types of information, such as fleet and waste figures are collected directly from council using simple templates. It’s all stored perpetually in the secure Planet Footprint data centre that also records the processes used to collect data, providing councils with a secure corporate memory and peace of mind.

The most powerful aspect of Tasmanian councils’ involvement with Planet Footprint is the strategic support that is being provided to each council to help them apply and act on the performance information. Each council has established a pathway for uptake of the information into their organisation. Each council has also set milestones for building the ‘ownership’ of environmental issues among all key staff, to ensure energy and greenhouse responsibility does not reside with one or two staff.

Through building an energy ‘culture’ among staff, each council will be able to achieve performance improvement in a more streamlined, resource-effective way.

For more information about Planet Footprint, visit www.planetfootprint.com, or phone 1300 721 113.
The four new water corporations are now well into the first 100 working days. Whilst there has been the odd teething problem and a fair bit of political comment, progress has been positive.

Our first accounts were sent out in October and the much needed cash is starting to flow. While this task has been long and difficult, success has been realised and the role of councils has been significant.

On 14 October, I and the other regional Corporation Chief Executives signed Compliance Implementation Plans with the Regulators. These plans were required by the Interim Licenses to address compliance with legislative, regulation and license obligations. Not only does the plan set out the requirements placed on the corporation, but also sets out the mutual obligations on each of the regulators.

I recently presented a paper to an Australian Water Association meeting on Ben Lomond Water’s First 100 Days. Whilst I set out the challenges we have faced, ensuring the transition was as smooth as possible and service levels were maintained, I commented that the real work starts now. This work includes developing and implementing all the plans required by the regulatory environment and is necessary to ensure the corporations achieve everything expected of us.

Some of the Requirements of the Compliance Implementation Plan include: the development of a Wastewater Management Plan, an Asset Management Project Plan, an Emergency Management Plan, a Drinking Water Quality Management Plan for each water supply scheme, a Compliance Plan and Project Plan. Once complete, the Management Plans may be audited by the appropriate regulator, or an external body appointed by the regulator. It is important to understand that the Compliance Implementation Plan is an agreed plan and not one imposed on the corporation by the regulators.

We at Ben Lomond Water are focused on achieving the Government’s ambitious aim of ensuring our water and sewerage infrastructure is upgraded to provide the necessary improvements in performance. Whilst this will not be easy, we look forward to the challenges and playing our role in improving the service to our customers. Ben Lomond Water is very grateful for the very strong support we have had from our owner councils and their staff and we look forward to continuing this very positive relationship.

The 2010 Clean Up Australia Day is just around the corner and it is set to be bigger than ever as Australians celebrate the 20th anniversary of the iconic event.

Clean Up Australia Chairman, Ian Kiernan AO, said Local Government has played a crucial role in helping Clean Up Australia Day reach the 20-year mark. “It’s because of that continued support that the day has been so successful over the past 20 years,” he said. “From advertising the event within the community, to hosting council run clean ups and removing the rubbish at the end of the day - if it wasn’t for local councils, Clean Up Australia Day simply wouldn’t be the success it is.”

The dates for the 2010 Clean Up Days are: Business Clean Up Day (2 March); Schools Clean Up Day (5 March); and Clean Up Australia Day (7 March). For details on how your Council can become involved, visit www.cleanup.org.au, or phone 1800 282 329.
Local Dive Clubs Join Global Underwater Clean Up

Car batteries, truck and car tyres, an alternator, old wagon wheels, bricks and bottles, a paddle and steel pipes contributed to the haul of rubbish removed from the Derwent River by volunteer divers, as part of a global underwater clean up, held on International Clean Up Day on 19 September.

Last year, 1,377,141 plastic bags and 714,892 plastic bottles were removed by volunteers from beaches and waters around the world. Project AWARE’s longstanding International Cleanup Day event is the biggest underwater cleanup of its kind. Held annually on the third Saturday in September, more than 370,000 volunteers around the world clean over 33,000 miles of shoreline to retrieve seven million pounds of rubbish.

Among the dive clubs involved in Tasmania were the GoDive group, the Tas Uni Dive Club, the Aqua Scuba Group and the Tasmanian Scuba Diving Club. Non-diving volunteers were encouraged to remove rubbish from local shorelines and beaches.

At Geilston Bay, Clarence City Council partnered with volunteer divers from Go Dive, providing skip bins and picking up the rubbish disposal costs.

Anti-Littering Partners Put a Lid on Rubbish

The Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage, Michelle O’Byrne, has launched the second phase of an education campaign to combat littering in Tasmania. The anti-littering enforcement and education drive will be stepped up over summer to further promote the Litter Hotline and the anti-littering message to road users. It will also include radio and taxi back advertising, as well as posters in ferry, bus and air terminals, and car rental businesses. The State Government has committed $400,000 towards the campaign, with over $100,000 from the National Packaging Covenant.

Covenant CEO, Ed Cordner, said if people think throwing litter out of the window keeps the car tidy, then they are completely missing the bigger picture. “Littering has a significant impact on our environment, he said. “We are very hopeful Tasmania’s new litter laws and hotline can help change this.”

The campaign began in January 2008 as a partnership between the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and the National Packaging Covenant, and included the creation of a Litter Hotline to encourage members of the public to report littering either on-line, or by phone. Up until the beginning of October, 1,327 reports were made to the Litter Hotline, resulting in 548 infringement notices, 101 written warning notices and 1 Abatement Notice.

Members of the public can report a littering offence via the litter hotline number on 1300 135 513, or by visiting www.environment.tas.gov.au/litter.
Launceston Works Towards a Greener Future

In September, Launceston City Council received $788,000 under the Federal Government’s Green Precinct Funding program for the Greening Inveresk Precinct - Towards Water and Energy Sustainability project.

The partnership, between the University of Tasmania, NRM North, Launceston City Council, the York Park and Inveresk Precinct Authority and Council’s Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG), will ensure the community is well educated about the need to reduce our carbon footprint.

The on-the-ground elements of the project include programming heating and cooling, lights, refrigeration and hot water at Aurora Stadium. These will come on only when required and replace fluorescent lights and down lights with more energy efficient lights at both Aurora and Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. The project will also see rainwater captured from the Aurora Stadium grandstand roof and stormwater utilised to water the ground. These improvements will make the Inveresk precinct more sustainable, without compromising the quality of the facilities.

To achieve the target to reduce CO2 emissions at Council by 15% and to reduce community emissions by 10% by 2015, compared to 2007/08, Launceston City Council is focusing on reducing water and energy use in all operations.

In Brief

Schools Equipped to Monitor Energy Use
As part of the Federal Government’s National Solar Schools program, students from fifty schools across Tasmania are being given access to the latest technology to monitor their energy, gas and water use. Courtesy of a partnership between CSIRO and The Powercom Group, CSIRO’s FLECK™ sensors are being incorporated into web-based monitoring equipment as part of a statewide rollout. The FLECK™ sensors are able to relay information about energy consumption within a school and students can monitor the amount of energy generated from PV solar panels and see in real time the impact of energy saving initiatives. For further information, contact Rohan Windsor at the Powercom Group on (03) 6229 7966.

New Town Rivulet Rehabilitation Completed
The rehabilitation of the New Town Rivulet has been completed with the planting of native trees, weed removal and the installation of new signage. The rehabilitation project has been carried out by the Hobart and Glenorchy City Councils, NRM South and numerous volunteers. The project has already delivered increased water quality and improved habitat for a range of native animals living in and along the rivulet, and has also increased public amenity. Under the project, extensive weed control was undertaken, including the removal of well-established willow infestations. Areas of the rivulet banks were revegetated with more than 5,500 native trees and shrubs, many of which were grown by volunteers. Interpretive signage was developed to inform the local community about the works that have been undertaken and the environmental value of the rivulet.