President's Report
Working Together for Better Results

Chief Executive Officer's Report
A Focus on the Future of Local Government

Faces of Local Government
Five Minutes with Mayor Adriana Taylor
National Leadership Role for Kingborough General Manager
New GM for Break O’Day Council
Launceston City Council Welcomes New General Manager
Star Performers

News and Reviews
Highlights of the 98th Local Government Conference
2010 Local Government Awards for Excellence
Put Yourself in Our Shoes
New Dog Laws Commence Soon
Food for Thought
New Richmond Garden Honours Protector of Heritage
Premises Standards - Improving Building Access for all Australians
Plant Ahead Program Growing on Clarence Community
Message from the Minister
Vice-Regal Municipal Visits
Australian Early Development Index
New Homes to Old Stuff
News in Brief

People and Performance
Fighting Fires without Burning Bridges
Sustainability Objectives and Indicators Project
New Ways of Thinking about Sponsorship
How are you settling in?

Health and Wellbeing
Local Government gets behind 2010 Pollie Pedal
Tasmanians Urged to ‘Walk or Cycle there Today’

Environment
Double Victory for Burnie at Keep Australia Beautiful Competition
Mayor Joins Council on Climate Change
Home Energy Audit Toolkit
Initiatives Flow for Southern Water
Emulsion Storage Unit Reduces Waste
Which bin to put it in?
Tasmanian Protected Species Signage

Tourism and Events
Tasmania Strengthens Ties with New Caledonia
Tasmania a Hot Destination this Winter
Travel Information Service Waiting in the Wings
Business Events Tasmania – the New Tasmanian Convention Bureau
Kids in the Park Draws Record Crowd
Successful Cruise Ship Season for Burnie
Feelgood Festival Rocks Hobart

ICT
Social Media – the Tip of the Iceberg
National Cyber Security Week 2010
Taking the Headache out of Reporting Budgeting and Business Analysis

Business and Finance
Pitt & Sherry Wins Prestigious National Award
Continued Growth sees New Role at Quadrant
Technology Rises to Record Management Challenge
ICLEI Oceania Welcomes New CEO Regional Director
Customer Service is Dead...Can you Revive it?

Around the Nation

Roads and Engineering
Park and Ride Bus Services for Kingston
Get Serious about Road Safety
Revolutionary Electric Car Launched
New Guide for Heavy Vehicle Drivers

Diary Dates
The 2010 Local Government Conference proved to be a memorable, informative and enjoyable event for all those in attendance. Some event highlights are featured in this edition of LGAT News, followed by details of the winners and finalists of the 2010 Local Government Awards for Excellence. The LGAT would like to thank all those councils that submitted award nominations, and all those who supported and contributed to the success of the conference including delegates, our conference partners – IPWEA, LGMA and the ALGWA, speakers, sponsors, trade exhibitors and business associates.

On page 32, we hear from the new Local Government Minister, the Hon Bryan Green MP, who has given his commitment to working with the sector to achieve sustainable outcomes, with a focus on both the short and long-term. The Minister will continue to keep us updated on his progress in future editions of the magazine.

As an elected member, life brings its fair share of highs and lows. But for those involved in welcoming a children’s choir (pictured on the cover) from an underprivileged school in Nouméa on a cultural visit to Tasmania, the encounter brought some unexpected and unforgettable moments. During their visit, the students gave moving performances at the France to Freycinet Festival on Tasmania’s East Coast, for Lord Mayor Rob Valentine at the Hobart Town Hall, and for The Hon Peter Underwood and Mrs Underwood at Government House. We hope the children took away as many precious memories as those they left behind. Read more on page 47.

With the rollout of the National Broadband Network, councils are being actively encouraged to embrace the social media as an effective communication tool. The subject was raised at the 2010 Local Government Conference by speakers Dominic Thurbon, and Whittlesea Council’s Brad Wynter. In Social Media – the Tip of the Iceberg (page 52), Dr Katrena Stephenson explores some of the possibilities, as well as the pros and cons.
By now you will all be aware of the decision by Glenorchy City Council to withdraw its membership form the Local Government Association of Tasmania. It is indeed a sad day for Local Government in the state and extremely disappointing that there has been a fracture in the solidarity of Local Government speaking and acting as a sector.

Glenorchy City Council was significantly impacted by the reforms to water and sewerage and it was always going to represent a challenge to Council to retain all its previous budget commitments as a result of the pending shortfalls. It was hoped that the value that Association membership provided would have outweighed other considerations but Council has taken its decision and that decision is respected.

I wish to assure members that the Association remains a vibrant and financial organisation that is capable and absolute in its efforts to provide maximum benefits to its members. The ability to speak with one voice and in a united way has been the strength of Local Government in Tasmania for almost a hundred years since the Association came into existence.

History shows us that water and sewerage reform was a decision taken unilaterally by the State Government and one which it was prepared and wanting to implement by establishing a single State-owned entity that would assume the assets and operations of council activities without compensation. Councils were united in voicing their displeasure and anger at this proposition and charged the Association with seeking to negotiate an outcome that would retain ownership and control of the corporations and activities within Local Government hands, that there be regional structures and that dividends and tax equivalents also be retained by councils. Significant weight was also placed on ensuring that employees were not disadvantaged in this process.

There was a fundamental acceptance that the reform was going to happen with or without Local Government and the Association, at the behest of member councils, took a strategic position of pursuing a Local Government centric outcome. Sure, some of the governance compromises that had to be made were not entirely satisfying, but the overall outcome was in keeping with what the members charged the Association with delivering. In addition to negotiating $5 million to support councils with transition, an undertaking was gained from the Treasurer to allow all councils to retain any reserves that had been accumulated against these assets. These were significant gains for many councils.

The efforts on water and sewerage reform underpin the need to speak as a united voice. There were winners and losers, but all councils were satisfied that once the negotiations had resulted in a Local Government ownership framework, that the challenge was then about making it work. Some councils had to transfer assets worth many millions of dollars but, in doing so, have taken a significant equity stake in the corporations and the returns they will generate in the future. Smaller councils transferred assets of lesser worth but, in relative terms, the impacts were often somewhat larger. The fact is that it was hard on everyone but we worked together to achieve an outcome that was in the interests of all.

And that’s the importance of solidarity and sticking together. The Minister for Local Government recently announced at the Local Government Conference a desire to pursue more reform with Local Government. It will be more important now than ever before that Local Government is able to speak as a sector and ensure that all issues are taken into account in any debate on its future. Fractured responses, or an array of options being presented in this environment provides the opportunity for others to choose the best outcome, rather than a preferred position being demonstrated, prosecuted and supported by evidence.

And the same can be said at the national level. The concessions and benefits that have accrued to Local Government in recent years have been based on the ability for Local Government to put strong, evidence-based, singular positions to the Australian Government. Ongoing funding for roads, community infrastructure and Local Government reform has resulted from sustained but singular access by Local Government.

With the plethora of planning reform, environmental management, infrastructure strategies and any number of legislative processes impacting on the functions of Local Government all on their way at the moment, we must stay united. The strength of the sector is in remaining as one while respecting the differences of opinion and circumstance of fellow members.

The Association is committed to serving its members and is willing to address and meet the needs of members or any issues they seek to raise. I can assure you that as President, I intend keeping the Association strong, relevant and a force in the pursuit of all things that improve the lot of member councils.
After many months of waiting, the Australian Government recently released its report on the review of the Australian taxation system. Otherwise known as the Henry Report, seven of the 137 recommendations were accepted by the Australian Government, with others under review pending further consideration.

From a Local Government perspective, nothing changed very much. While there were some hopes that we may see a new order of revenue sharing between the three levels of government, it was more hope than likelihood that we could have expected significant change in this area. Road user charging was another area that may have netted Local Government some benefit but this remains a matter under review.

What we can take away from the report is the acknowledgement of the important role that Local Government has come to play in the delivery of government services in Australia and a strong message that, given the expertise that Local Government has in the delivery of some goods and services, payments to Local Government for specific purposes can represent significant value for money for other levels of government.

We already know that Local Government is the sphere of government that is closest to the people, with a governance structure that is responsive to the changing needs of local communities. Local Government is effective in determining the needs of a local community and is efficient in meeting these needs in delivering services.

While direct funds didn’t flow to Local Government from the Henry Report, we must not lose sight of these important and fundamental observations. The Australian Government is keen to work with Local Government wherever and whenever it can. It sees that the capacity to deliver services on the ground to the parties that most need them can be best effected through Local Government structures. There is no administrative overhead associated with receiving and distributing the money and the reporting regime is generally less complex than when indirect arrangements are put into place. These are important principles and demonstrate the significant role that Local Government plays in the everyday life of Australians.

The newly appointed Minister for Local Government, Bryan Green, announced at the Local Government Conference that he was keen to progress Local Government reform in the state. The recently completed report into voluntary amalgamations included recommendations from the Local Government Board that, in light of the unlikelihood of voluntary amalgamations bringing about reform in Local Government, a more comprehensive and inclusive approach should be embarked upon to address any shortcomings that may presently exist within the sector. The Minister endorsed this sentiment at conference indicating a desire to work collaboratively with Local Government in this process.

It is most unfortunate that, in any debate that is commenced on Local Government reform, the very tired and very weary chestnut of amalgamations gets rolled out in the first sentence. In fairness to the Minister, he did not. The recent withdrawal of Glenorchy City Council from the Association drew mass comment from the community, but not about the issue of Glenorchy’s departure, but the need for fewer councils in the state.

The important thing that Local Government will need to influence in any debate on Local Government reform is that the problems and challenges faced by Local Government remain – whether there are 29, 19, or nine councils. What we need to focus on is the problems that presently exist and move to resolve them. Structural reform may resolve some issues but it is not the solution.
Councils are constantly being required to take on more complex and resource-intensive functions. In many cases these are statutory functions for which charging regimes bear no resemblance to the cost of service provision. There are also instances where State Government is providing related services on a statewide basis, replicating facilities and resources. There needs to be some consideration of the community outcomes in these processes and where the funds should properly be directed to ensure that the right resources can be allocated to the problems or opportunities at hand. Maybe all councils are not capable of doing all the same things. Maybe some communities don’t want or need particular services. Perhaps bureau service delivery is a sensible option in some cases.

While the present planning reform is seeking to ensure that every planning scheme looks the same, we need to ask the question as to whether every council needs to be the same. Consistency is a fine thing but at what cost? If the community can’t afford it, or a council cannot attract resources to provide it, it doesn’t mean that the system is broken, it just means that there is a challenge to be overcome. Amalgamation is unlikely to solve the problem and, while many countries are printing more money in response to the present financial and currency crises, it is unlikely that councils will see the benefit of this activity.

So if we are going to have more reform, let’s address the problems that are in the system and let’s keep an eye on the long-term sustainability of councils in the state and the communities they represent. We need to be strategic. We don’t need another reform dictate like water and sewerage reform. If reform is coming, we need it to be collaborative. We need to be involved and we need to be make sure that, whatever reform is proposed, the implementation and impacts are fully understood before we embark on any major change.