President’s Message

This week, a milestone was reached by Local Government at a special meeting of the Association, where it was resolved to support the formation of a single water and sewerage corporation for Tasmania, subject to agreement by the State Government and to a number of requirements associated with governance and transitional arrangements.

The in-principal decision included corporation’s law providing the basis of the Corporation’s formation and that it should be guided by ASX Corporate Governance Principals. It was proposed to remove fundamental requirements for State Government oversight and involvement with the operations and authority of the Corporation, including the requirement for oversight by the GBE Scrutiny Committee.

The councils resolved that there would be two formal meetings of all owner councils, and four regional shareholder meetings each year to allow for quarterly briefings in each region. The meeting determined that an arrangement of one vote per council should apply unless a poll is requested, at which point voting would be based on the set asset contributions made by each council. The meeting agreed that the circumstances under which a poll is to be requested needed further clarification and sign off by councils.

The meeting decided that the new Board for the single corporation should have seven skill-based directors and that a selection committee comprising eight Local Government members, two from the North-West, two from the North, and four from the South, together with the Chairman of the Board, once appointed, would be responsible for their direct appointment.

It was agreed that future distribution entitlements would be in accordance with the proposal formulated by the current Chairman of the Board which would see all councils in an improved financial position over their present arrangements. Present priority distribution arrangements should continue to the legislated end date.

Owner councils will also seek from the State Government a commitment to meet the costs associated with the preparation of legislation, incorporation of the new entity and wind up costs of the present organisations. Councils will seek that the State Government waive such charges as stamp duty in the same way that occurred in the first round of reform.

The meeting reaffirmed its previous position to seek legislative protection against any move to privatisation and, importantly, agreed that their support for the move to a single entity was dependent on the opportunity to review and approve all instruments of governance to ensure that their requirements are met.

I applaud the maturity of debate and leadership displayed at the meeting and I am very pleased to advise that a meeting with the Premier has been arranged for Thursday, 21 June. I look forward to working with the Government on your behalf in bringing the proposal to reality.

The Role of Local Government in Addressing Homelessness Survey

The Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning (CHURP) is working in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and each state-based Local Government Organisation (LGA) to explore the role of Local Government in addressing homelessness and housing. Funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the research findings will inform a final report and handbook of best practices for Local Governments.

A survey is being conducted to collect data on what Local Government is, or is not doing in homelessness and housing currently. The results should provide a comprehensive snapshot of the range of behaviours, actions and strategies being used by Local Government to address homelessness and associated challenges. We will notify all Local Governments of the survey results once finalised. Completing the survey should take between 20 - 30 minutes and results will significantly contribute to the final outputs. Please complete the survey by 19 June. Visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/TheRoleofLocalGovernmentinHomelessness.

WE ARE MOVING!

On 22 June, LGAT will be relocating to 326 Macquarie St, Hobart. Our other contact details shall remain the same. Please note that we will be out of reach between 21-25 June.
Communicators in Local Government Study

Drs Peter Simmons and Felicity Small from Charles Sturt University are doing the first national study of Local Government communication professionals and their work. The study will help us to understand and plan for:

- the people who work in communication-related work for Local Government;
- the type of work done by Local Government communicators; and
- professional development and other needs of Local Government communicators.

If your work is communication-related, please take 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire.


Special Offer for Local Government Employees

During June, Local Government employees who join or switch their cover to the Local Government Employees (LGE) Health Plan can receive one month’s free cover and enjoy no waiting periods for most extras services which normally have 2 and 6 months waiting times. If you already have cover with another health fund, you can simply switch to an equivalent policy with the LGE Health Plan and your cover will continue (no new waiting periods will apply). The LGE Health Plan lets you join a health cover with a hospital excess, and save with lower premiums. Then, if you or an eligible family member are hospitalised and pay the excess, the LGE Health Plan will refund it to you. For more information about the plan and this special offer, visit www.health-link.com.au/lgat, or call 1300 543 7526.

Charitable Organisations Grants Program

Grants of up to $10,000 (incl. GST) are available for projects and activities that maximise the wellbeing of vulnerable groups in the community. Priority will be given to applications that focus on: addressing the risk factors and social impact associated with problem gambling in high risk areas; and/or socially isolated and economically or culturally disadvantaged groups and communities. Charities and not-for-profit community organisations are invited to apply. Applications close on 22 June. For further details, visit www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/gambling/grants/2011-12_grants_program.

Knowledge Partnering in Project Evaluation

Evaluation is increasingly an expected part of the project cycle but too often project evaluations become compliance exercises rather than real learning opportunities. The Institute for Regional Development (Cradle Coast) has developed a low-cost project evaluation approach which values the knowledge of project participants and staff while developing organisations’ applied research skills. A free, one-hour seminar, to be held in the Paul Chandler Room, Population Health, DHHS, Level 2, 25 Argyle Street, Hobart, from 12 noon, on 25 June, will provide an introduction to the Knowledge Partnering methodology and how it can be used in a wide range of on-the-ground projects to embed a rigorous and relevant evaluation component. Teleconferencing is available in Burnie, Launceston and Devonport. Register at www.surveymonkey.com/s/EIG25thJune2012. For more information, email Dr Jenny Kerrison at kerrison_jenny@yahoo.com.au, or phone 6225 0083.

Upcoming Events

- National General Assembly, Canberra - 17-20 June
- AGM / General Meeting, Hobart - 11 July
- 100th Local Government Conference, Hobart - 12-13 July