President’s Message

I sit down to write this column having just arrived home from an Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) Board Meeting in Canberra. The agenda item that took up most of our time was the subject of financial recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution. Prior to our meeting, there had been the announcement by the Federal Government that there would not be a referendum on the matter of Indigenous recognition in the Constitution at the next election. I therefore “assumed” that we in Local Government must start preparing ourselves for a similar announcement!

ALGA President, Felicity-Ann Lewis, reported that she had recently met with Minister Simon Crean urging him to make a decision on the question and to establish a parliamentary committee to progress the referendum case. Although no formal response has been received at this time, neither has there been an announcement that there would not be a Local Government referendum question at the next election.

The board of ALGA are very mindful of the time and effort needed to argue our case with members of federal and state governments as well as our local communities across Australia. It is a mammoth task and one that will also need substantial funding. It is fair to say that there are a number of mixed messages being received from politicians of all political persuasions and, as has been said many times previously, we need bipartisan support to be successful. In a concerted effort to achieve this, ALGA in the coming weeks will be taking steps to ensure that our politicians really do understand why financial recognition is so necessary.

ALGA’s advice from Professor George Williams is that the legislation passed by the Government has not overcome the problems that could flow from the two High Court cases, Pape and Williams. ALGA sought a second opinion from Professor Anne Twomey whose opinion mirrored that provided by Professor Williams. Uncertainty continues to exist, therefore ALGA will be pursuing Minister Crean to establish the Parliamentary Committee and will work to ensure that we do have bipartisan support. The board fully understands that much needs to be achieved before we have any chance of success and in relation to the timing of a referendum, have resolved that they will only move forward when they are completely satisfied that we can win. Our next board meeting will be in Hobart at the time of the National Local Roads and Transport Congress, from 14-16 November. I will continue to keep you informed as this important issue progresses.
Sorell Mayor Resigns
Carmel Torenius has resigned from her position as Mayor and Councillor on the Sorell Council. Mrs Torenius served as an elected member on Council for 22 years, with 17 of those years as Mayor. Deputy Mayor Brett McDonald will act in the office of Mayor until a by-election is called. Sorell Council General Manager, Bill Costin said “Sorell Council wishes to thank Mrs Torenius for her 22 year contribution to the community which was served with honesty and distinction, and wishes her all the best for the future.”

National Award for Iconic Track
The world class North-South Track on Mt. Wellington won the National Open Space Development Category at the Parks and Leisure Australia awards ceremony, held recently in Newcastle. Conceived and implemented as a joint project between the City of Hobart, Glenorchy City Council, the Wellington Park Management Trust and the Tasmanian State Government, the North-South Track embraces the principles of minimal impact design and construction. To ensure it blends in with its surrounds, no mortar was used in any stone work and, wherever possible, only locally sourced materials found within the vicinity of the track were used in its construction. The track has been designed to meet the recreational needs of mountain bike riders and also caters for bush walkers.

ALGWA National Conference
The ALGWA National Conference will be held in Ipswich, QLD from 8-10 November. The conference is a ‘must do’ for all women in Local Government - whether elected officials or council staff. Men are also welcome. The program promises an exciting line-up of speakers and workshops covering topics including: Engaging Your Community; Resilience, Resolve, Relationships; Critical Thinking, Problem Solving; Gender Equity; and Cultural Diversity. Register before 8 October to take advantage of the early bird rate - $680 (ALGWA members) and $780 (non-members). To view a copy of the program or to register, visit www.discoveripswich.com.au/pages/2012-algwa-national-conference.

Why Great Cities Point People in the Right Direction
The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and the Hobart City Council will present Lost? Why Great Cities Point People in the Right Direction, from 11.30am – 1.30pm at the Menzies Research Institute in Hobart, on 12 October. This free seminar discusses wayfinding and how people orientate themselves in a city. It is the second in a series of talks about the role of landscape architecture and urban design in urban areas, towns and cities. A light lunch will be provided. For further information, visit www.hobarturban.com.au.

Finding the Best Options to Prepare for Climate Change Impacts
The Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency has released four reports to assist local governments and other infrastructure planners to assess the costs and benefits of adaptation measures to address potential climate change impacts. These reports, including an economic framework and three associated case studies, are available online at www.climatechange.gov.au/publications.aspx.

Upcoming Local Government Webinars
You are invited to join the following Local Government webinars during October: ‘Holding the difficult conversation because of inappropriate conduct and performance’ will be held from 2.30pm - 4.00pm on 8 October. ‘Effective Recruitment: Beyond Nice Chats and Gut Feel’ will take place from 2.00pm - 3.30pm on 15 October. Recorded webinars are also available on a range of topics such as Australia’s clean energy future, engaging communities, handling difficult people, social media and leadership. To register, go to www.cpdlive.com/lgat/index.html.

Scholarship Opportunities for ‘Board Ready’ Women
Australia’s ‘board ready’ women are invited to apply for Australian Government-backed scholarships, aimed at increasing the number of women in the nation’s boardrooms. The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) has called for applications in the second round of its Board Diversity Scholarship Program. Scholarship recipients undertake the Company Directors course, or Mastering the Boardroom course and receive a one-year AICD membership. Applications close on 11 October. Visit www.companydirectors.com.au/diversityscholarship.

Green Flag Award
The Green Flag Award scheme has been the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales since 1996, and Parks Forum is now delivering the program in Australia and New Zealand. The award will provide a key benchmark against which parks and green spaces can be measured. To enter, nominate one or more parks for a Green Flag Award assessment. The first round of assessments for 2012-13 will take place from October to November and agencies who achieve Green Flag status will be announced early in 2013. For further information, visit www.parksforum.org/cms/pages/Green-Flag-Award.html.

Upcoming Events
LGMA Conference, Bridport 3-5 October
National Local Roads and Transport Congress, Hobart 14-16 November
General Meeting, Devonport 21 November
Mayors’ Workshop, Devonport 22 November