President’s Message

I commence this week’s column with an update on the progress of water and sewerage. The Bill was tabled in Parliament on 24 October and it is anticipated that debate will occur around 13 November, when Parliament sits again.

The Selection Committee held their initial meeting on 17 October and appointed Mayor Tony Foster as Chairman. Agreement was reached at the meeting on a charter for the committee, timelines for the selection process and role statements for the Chairman and Directors of the Corporation. The Committee resolved to appoint a consultant to assist with the process of selection of Chair and Directors, and to provide advice in regards to remuneration. Expressions of interest will be called late next week for organisations interested in this consultancy. The timeline provides for the appointment of a Chairman by the end of January 2013 and Directors by the end of February 2013.

Last week, councils were provided with a revised version of the Constitution for a single authority, together with supporting papers to assist working through the document. We understand that timelines remain tight but it would be appreciated if councils can provide an indication at the General Meeting of the Association, scheduled for 21 November, as to their overall satisfaction, and also agree to the document being forwarded to the December council meeting agenda, with a view to agreeing the terms of the Constitution and their consent to be a member of the new Corporation.

The forums held last week by the Director of the Local Government Division were informative sessions that generated a great deal of discussion. We certainly have interesting and busy times ahead as we discuss the role of Local Government during the course of next year, consider how best to implement the recommendations of the rating and valuation review, and make our position known on the elements of electoral reform that have been requested by the Minister.

At the time of writing, it would appear that two years of talks on ‘matters forestry’ have failed. A great number of our municipalities have been devastated by the downturn in the timber industry and many have been quite vocal as they endeavour to assist their communities. I note other councils have been making their position very clear in regards to proposed new developments in their region. When things are tough, communities look to their local council for help and I believe we do have a responsibility to do everything within our power to support them. I am pleased that councils are voicing their opinions and trust that Local Government can help progress sensible and sustainable developments to provide employment that will generate wealth in our communities.

Reduction in Number of Local Government Councillors

The number of councillors on six Tasmanian councils will be reduced following the Local Government Board’s Review of Councillor Numbers. The Minister for Local Government, Bryan Green, has accepted the Board’s recommendations which will result in fewer councillors elected to the Central Coast, Devonport City, Glamorgan-Spring Bay, Glenorchy City, Kingborough and Tasman Councils.

"Of the seven councils who volunteered to participate in this review, six will see a reduced number of councillors phased in over the next two council elections, scheduled for October 2013 and October 2015," said Mr Green. "I will also be recommending that the Governor make orders that casual vacancies not be filled until the desired reduction is achieved."

"The Board considered the potential impact of any change of councillor numbers on representation of the community, the ability of the council to make decisions, any financial impacts, the ability of the council to deliver services, electoral arrangements and statewide consistency," Mr Green said. "During the review, the Board has also developed a consistent and transparent framework for the future determination of councillor numbers that can be applied across the State."

The review began in November 2011, with the Board finalising its recommendations in July, followed by further consultation with councils and their communities. The Board recommended no change in the number of councillors elected to the Break O’Day Council which also took part in the review. Further information on the Board and its Review is available at www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/lgd/local_government_board.
Draft Report on Valuation and Rating System
The Minister for Local Government, Bryan Green, has released a draft report for public comment recommending changes to the State’s valuation and rating system. The report was developed by a joint State and Local Government Steering Committee, responsible for reviewing the current performance of the State’s valuation and rating system and making recommendations for reform. Key recommendations from the review include: the State Government discontinuing Assessed Annual Value (AAV) valuations and that councils transition to Capital Value for rating purposes by 1 July 2016, and that State and Local Governments work closely to build councils’ capability to manage the process of moving away from AAV during this transitional period. The Steering Committee found that the existing AAV based rating system is both difficult to understand and characterised by rating volatility and is therefore not the most optimum system available. Mr Green said extensive modelling and an analysis of the implications for every council of a transition away from AAV was undertaken, and urged councils and interested community members to provide feedback on the draft report by 19 November. The Steering Committee will consider the feedback before finalising the report and submitting it for the Minister’s consideration. The draft report is available at www.dpac.tas.gov.au.

Financial Literacy Exchange (FLEX) Grants Program
The $1 million FLEX Grants Program has been launched by the State Government to enhance the way financial literacy and assistance is provided to Tasmanians most in need by funding practical initiatives that: assist people to receive financial mentoring and budgeting help; provide access to financial management materials and tools; and provide referral to specialist advice and government services where needed. The FLEX Grants Program will fund initiatives between $5,000 to $250,000, which may vary from significant impact and reach in Tasmania, to smaller projects with local outcomes. The following low-income households are a focus of the program: single persons; single parents with dependent children; working households; and people employed in declining industries, such as manufacturing and forestry. Organisations from the community, government or business sectors are eligible to apply. Applications should be submitted by 3 December to SU@dpac.tas.gov.au. For enquiries, call 6232 7041.

Tourism Industry Regional Development Fund Grants
The Tourism Industry Regional Development Fund (TIRF) Grants Program has been launched for regional tourism businesses looking to improve their tourism offerings. The TIRF Grants program offers grants from $50,000 – $250,000 (GST exclusive) on a matched dollar-for-dollar funding basis. A major focus of the program is to improve the quality of accommodation and attractions in regional areas. Funding is also available for innovative projects to attract interstate and international visitors and extend their length of stay. Further information is available from www.ret.gov.au/tourism/business/tirf/Pages/index.aspx.

LGAT News Readers’ Survey
Don’t miss the opportunity to win a Peppermint Bay Cruise for two people, valued at $236, simply by completing a brief, online survey seeking your views and perceptions of the LGAT News magazine. To be entered in the prize draw, please forward your comments by 16 November. Full details can be found in the September edition of LGAT News. To complete the survey, visit www.lgat.tas.gov.au. For details about Peppermint Bay, head to http://peppermintbay.com.au/cruise_pbc.php.

Learner Driver Mentor Program 2012 Funding
Grants are available through the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, for community organisations to establish, consolidate or expand a Learner Driver Mentor Program (LDMP). Two categories of funding are available: for the establishment of a new Learner Driver Mentor Program, or one which has been in operation for less than six months (up to $25,000); and for the consolidation or expansion of an existing Learner Driver Mentor Program (up to $20,000). Applications close on 19 November. Further information is available at www.transport.tas.gov.au/safety/mentor, or phone 6233 5290.

Design of the Public Waterfront: the Great Untapped Potential of Hobart’s Foreshore
The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and Hobart City Council presents the third event in City Talks Urban Landscapes Seminar Series – a series of talks and events about the role of landscape architecture and urban design in Tasmania. This event, to be held from 11.30am – 1.30pm, on 9 November in Hobart, discusses the potential for redeveloping Hobart’s waterfront, drawing upon experiences in Sydney and Auckland. Entry is free and includes a light lunch. For more information, visit www.hobarturban.com.au. RSVP to tasmania@aila.org.au.

Managing Long Life, Hidden Assets
A new Stormwater Drainage Condition Assessment Workshop, coordinated by IPWEA, will be held on 8 November in Launceston. The workshop aims to assist asset management practitioners to apply best practice for inspection, condition and performance assessment for stormwater drainage assets, and will focus on the practicalities of how to prepare and undertake a stormwater drainage network condition survey. For more information, visit www.ipwea.org.au/SWD2012.

National Rural Women’s Conference
The inaugural National Rural Women’s Conference, being held in Canberra from 18–20 February 2013, is expected to bring more than 500 women from regional, rural and remote Australia to learn, discuss challenges, celebrate and share their vision for the future. More than 50 inspirational women will be sharing their experiences with presentations on the topics of Big... inspiration, Big... challenges, Big... business and Big... networks. Register by 11 November and save $100 on the registration fee. Full registration costs $495. For full details, visit www.nrwc.com.au.
Sister Cities Australia Annual Conference

The Sister Cities Australia Annual Conference, to be held in Devonport from 11-14 November, is shaping up to be one with plenty of thought-provoking and inspiring speakers including Dr Peter Ellyard, Australia’s most prominent futurist; Colin Jones from UTAS who will explore what means to be an Entrepreneurial City; plus plenty of Australian Councils sharing their perspective on city and town partnerships. Alongside the adult conference will be a youth leadership conference focused on social justice and nurturing the future change-makers. There will also be plenty of opportunities for delegates to share their success, challenges and ideas for the future. Elected members and council staff are encouraged to register by 2 November. For more information, visit www.devonport.tas.gov.au.

4th Biennial Abercrombie Lecture

Are you interested in the development of your city? The 4th Biennial Abercrombie Lecture, to be held from 6.00pm on 8 November at the Hobart Town Hall, will be presented by Stephen Alchin, Executive Director Planning for Infrastructure Australia. Stephen has 30 years’ experience in urban and infrastructure planning across all spheres of government and in the private sector. Refreshments will be provided from 5.15pm. Entry is free. The Abercrombie Lecture is presented by the Planning Institute of Australia - Tas. Division in conjunction with UTAS and the Hobart City Council. For information, visit www.planning.org.au or phone 6226 2521. RSVP to UTAS.Events@utas.edu.au.

Advanced Leadership Program for Women

The Advanced Leadership Program is part of a national initiative to increase Australia’s pool of executive level female leaders and focuses on applied learning outcomes to rapidly optimise the performance of high potential female leaders. During a career-defining, 12-month journey, leadership experts work one-on-one with students to assist them to achieve real-time personal and organisational goals. Scholarships are now available to women based in Tasmania to assist them to undertake the Advanced Leadership Program in 2013 in either Melbourne or Sydney. Scholarships are intended to offset the increased travel and accommodation costs incurred by interstate attendees, and will cover 50% of the program fee. To speak with a scholarship advisor, phone 1300 138 037. View the prospectus at http://wla.com.au/events/12/alp/2012%20WLA%20ALP%20prospectus_Interstate.pdf.

2012 Government Skills Australia National Conference

The 2012 Government Skills Australia National Conference is being held from 19-20 November in Melbourne. Bringing together the government and community safety sectors to connect, collaborate and celebrate the future of skills and workforce development, the 2012 conference will be delivered through interactive discussion, workshops and plenary sessions. For more information, visit www.cvent.com/events/change-is-the-only-constant-connect-collaborate-and-celebrate/event-summary-a0bb523d94af47a6a3a89a7b74c94d46d.aspx.

National Close the Gap Day - Investing in a Healthy Future

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people die 10-17 years younger than other Australians. The Close the Gap campaign brings together Indigenous organisations, governments, corporations and communities to facilitate a healthier future for Indigenous Australians. National Close the Gap Day will be held on 21 March. Register now to host an event in support of Indigenous health equality. Visit www.oxfam.org.au/national-day.

Regional socio-economic data now available

A range of social and economic data to assist Local Government planning across Tasmania is now available online. The data provides insightful, region-specific information relating to employment, education, the local economy, population growth, income, housing and internet connectivity. The data is presented across Australia’s 55 Regional Development Australia boundaries, making it easier to access regional information in one central location. The data will assist Local Government and communities across the State to better understand regional circumstances and to support planning and development. Find data about your region at myregion.gov.au.

TasCOSS 2012 Conference

The TasCOSS 2012 Conference is on at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart from 15-16 November. Themed Engagement, Innovation and Equity, there are 24 presentations to choose from and five plenary events. The first of these will be World Vision Australia CEO, Tim Costello’s keynote address, Social Inclusion: An Australian Paradox. The cost is $385 (TasCOSS members) and $550 (government). Register at www.tascoss.org.au, or call 6231 0755.

Upcoming Events

National Local Roads and Transport Congress, Hobart 14-16 November
General Meeting, Devonport 21 November

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