President’s Message

We are all acutely aware that, as a result of the signing of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, legislation has passed through the House of Assembly with a decision now resting with the Legislative Council. The Bill will be debated in the Upper House next week and, no matter which side of the fence you are sitting, we are all anxious to see the final outcome.

I have mentioned before in this column that there are people out there in our communities who are hurting and some of these people are turning to their local council for help. Councils I know will do anything they can to assist and I applaud the work that is being done throughout the State at this time.

We have regularly read in the press of the difficulties being faced by past forest contractors and workers, and then perhaps we move on to the next news item, but an email received this week from one of these people gave me quite a jolt. It was a reality check for me as this person was one of our own, an elected member who just when they thought things couldn’t get any worse, is now facing increasing pressure from the bank, yes, you know those organisations that cannot pass on the full interest rate reduction to their customers! They and others like them are endeavouring to refinance and consolidate loans so their home can be “saved”, only to be told that because of their address, whether it be Scottsdale or Triabunna, they are not a good investment. This seems to me to be extremely unfair and I wonder just how many others in affected towns across the State are experiencing similar issues.

As we approach the Christmas season I ask you to spare a thought for those in our communities who are facing hardship and anxiety. Whatever the outcome of the “forest peace deal”, there will remain many in our communities who will be looking to us in Local Government for help and, as I have said previously, I am confident we will do all in our power to assist them.

In closing, I say thank you for the contributions all elected members have made to another successful year in Local Government. I wish each and every one of you a very happy, safe and joyous Christmas as you share this special time with family and friends.

Councils Recognised for Community Health Initiatives

Dorset Council’s Healthy Communities Program was announced as the overall winner of the 2012 Medibank Active Tasmania Awards, coordinated by the Premier’s Physical Activity Council, receiving $11,000 in prize money. The Healthy Communities Program is an innovative and collaborative way for the Council to tackle the health needs of the Dorset community. New opportunities for physical activity have been created through bicycle and walking groups. The program also incorporated awareness campaigns such as Bridport Splash and created new opportunities for people to enjoy outdoor activity with new walking tracks. Category awards were also presented to Glenorchy City Council - Local Government - City; Dorset Council - Local Government - Other; Meander Valley Council - Collaboration or Partnership; Southern Midlands Council - Innovation. For further information about the Medibank Active Tasmania Awards visit www.getmoving.tas.gov.au.

Local Government Workforce Census Begins

The inaugural Australian Local Government Workforce and Employment Census (ALGWECensus), co-ordinated by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG), is open until 21 December. The collection of a nationally focused dataset about the Australian Local Government workforce will: underpin a range of national employment strategies; form the basis for potential funding of Local Government-based training initiatives; help improve workforce planning within individual councils; and support national efforts to address skill shortages, enhance the professionalism of Local Government and facilitate greater workforce diversity. The census will also develop and maintain a nationally consistent dataset on women’s participation in the Local Government sector. To participate, visit www.algwecensus.org.
Renewable Energy Fund – King and Flinders Islands

Guidelines for Round 2 of the Renewable Energy Fund – King and Flinders Islands are now available for projects that:

1. Deliver renewable energy innovations which benefit, directly and indirectly, end users of energy on the Bass Strait Islands (BSI).
2. Encourage renewable energy innovations which potentially have a wider application in other parts of Tasmania, nationally or internationally.
3. Reduce stationary or transport energy costs for residents or businesses on the BSI.
4. Reduce the reliance on diesel fuel and the extent of greenhouse gas emissions on the BSI.
5. Reduce the need for, and costs of, State-provided subsidies for energy on the BSI.
6. Complement relevant state, federal and local government policies, projects or programs.

Expressions of interest are invited before 2.00pm on 29 March 2013. Applicants are invited to seek advice from Fiona Howroyd, the Manager, Major Initiatives, Office of Energy Planning and Conservation (OEPC) at ref@dier.tas.gov.au, or by phoning (03) 6233 0827.

Tackling Bias Towards People with Disability

Comment is being sought on a discussion paper, Improving Employment Participation of People with Disability, which examines ways to increase employment participation and eliminate workplace discrimination for people with disability and how to best achieve reform including: improving equality for people with disability in employment and in the workplace; promoting among employers the elimination of discrimination on the basis of a person’s disability; and improving the productivity and competitiveness of Australian business through the advancement of people with disability in the workplace. People with disability, employers and peak organisations are invited to provide written submissions. The discussion paper is available at http://deewr.gov.au/disabilityreporting.

State Budget Mid-Year Financial Report

Tasmania is facing unprecedented economic challenges. Find out how the State is faring and the State Government’s plans for the future over lunch, from 12pm – 2pm, on 12 December at Wrest Point. Premier Lara Giddings will present her Mid-Year Financial Report and announce a new jobs package, followed by a Q&A session. Cost is $77 (TCCI members) and $99 (non-members). Register at www.tcci.com.au.

Support for Dads and Partners

From 1 January 2013, the Australian Government’s Dad and Partner Pay will be available to eligible working dads or partners. The new payment is available to eligible working dads or partners who care for a child born or adopted from 1 January 2013. Eligible dads or partners will be able to access up to two weeks of government-funded pay at the rate of the National Minimum Wage (currently about $606 per week before tax). Working dads or partners, including those in part-time, casual, seasonal and contract employment, or self-employed workers, those adopting and same-sex partners, may be eligible. Visit www.australia.gov.au/dadandpartnerpay for more information.

Survey on Social Media Adoption in Local Government

A PhD student from University of Adelaide is undertaking a study on ‘The Adoption of Social Media Application in Australian Local Government’ to explore the factors affecting Social Media adoption in Australian local councils. The research can help model the current status of adoption of Social Media in Local Government in Australia and will help identify exemplar organisations that have been successful with their social media initiatives which other organisations can use as benchmarks. It will also provide publishable empirical evidence on the benefits of adoption and impact of social media in Australia. Input is sought from councils that use social media applications. The 15-20 minute survey can be found at http://adelaide.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_71m1fbs2Z7qLOPr.

Investing in a Healthy Future

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people die 10-17 years younger than other Australians but, by working together, we can ‘Close the Gap’ within a generation. Registrations are invited for National Close the Gap Day, to be held on 21 March. The Close the Gap campaign brings together Indigenous organisations, governments, corporations and communities to facilitate a healthier future for Indigenous Australians. Join thousands of people and organisations around Australia holding events to raise awareness of the Indigenous health crisis. To register, visit www.oxfam.org.au/national-day.

Upcoming Events

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<tr>
<td>General Management Committee Meeting, Hobart</td>
<td>10 December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elected Members’ Workshop, Hobart</td>
<td>23-24 February</td>
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Local Government Association of Tasmania

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