President’s Message

In previous newsletters I have written a few words on planning and an article in yesterday’s Examiner newspaper has prompted me to provide further comment.

Like many of you reading this newsletter, I despair at the regular coverage of criticism of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, and council planning schemes and processes; criticism from industry bodies and developers.

I understand how frustrating it may be at times for developers, having to comply with requests to provide documentary evidence by way of reports to support their application, but this is part of the planning process. In general, council planning schemes provide a basis for what can and/or what may not be developed. I would suggest that in most cases, an application for a rezoning will undoubtedly require a great deal of additional information, necessary to argue the case for the rezoning to be successful. In many instances I believe that “the clock will stop” because insufficient information has not been supplied by the applicant and therefore it is highly likely that a 42-day total timeframe will be exceeded. Councils should not be criticised for that.

I really wonder how much of the criticism of our planning schemes and processes is justified. Is it the result of a council being “a little slack”, or is it that the development does not meet the conditions of the scheme, a development that the applicant is very passionate about? I firmly believe that in the majority of cases, it is most likely the latter.

As a matter of interest, the writer of the article referred to in my opening sentence is the only developer I am aware of that has achieved an approval for a development on “the wrong side of a flood levy”.

I would like to think that the culture at your council is one of being proactive in your approach to developers by offering assistance and advice as is necessary. I certainly encourage this whilst acknowledging the level of advice will vary with each application. Planning is a difficult area and I hope that with the “soon to be introduced” Regional Planning Schemes, developers will be see a number of benefits, at least with some consistency across the state.

Water and Sewerage Milestones Reached

Premier Lara Giddings welcomed three significant milestones in the reform of water and sewerage infrastructure in regional Tasmania this week. Earthworks have begun on a $5.2 million water treatment plant at Campbell Town, and water treatment plants have recently been completed at Queenstown and Swansea. Swansea residents and visitors can now enjoy water supplies that meet contemporary health standards for the first time in the town’s history, and it is hoped that Campbell Town and Ross residents will only have to face one more winter without a treated water supply. The Queenstown treatment plant was initiated by West Coast Council, then taken over by Cradle Mountain Water as part of the water and sewerage reform. The $2.5m water treatment plant is part of a $5m project that also includes two new reservoirs and new reticulation networks. The Premier acknowledged the hard work of the council owners and the staff of the Water and Sewerage Corporations to achieve this vision.

Population Audit

Federal and state governments talk a lot about population growth but Australia’s local councils have to deal with the day-to-day consequences. More people make our communities more vibrant but they take their toll on local roads and community services, and make long-term town planning more challenging. The Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), a think tank in Sydney, would like to know how mayors and council CEOs believe population growth affects their local communities. In particular, the CIS is interested in how the number of residents affects councils’ budgets, and whether existing council revenue sources are perceived to be adequate. The CIS’s online survey can be found at www.cis.org.au/research/lga-survey.

Grants to Reduce Sediment Input

NRM North, through the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program, is offering a new grants program aimed at reducing the amount of sediment entering the Tamar Estuary. Grants from $1,000 to $20,000 are available to landholders, community and industry groups, and Local Government. The projects must aim to reduce the amount of sediment entering the waterways, demonstrate effective and innovative methods and must be completed within a year. Applications close on 10 June. For more information, head to www.nrmnorth.org.au/teer, or phone NRM North on 6333 7777.
**Upcoming Events**

- **General Management Committee Meeting, Hobart** | 11 May
- **LGMA Congress, Cairns** | 22-25 May
- **National General Assembly, Canberra** | 19-23 June
- **AGM/General Meeting, Hobart** | 20 July
- **Local Government Conference, Hobart** | 21-22 July