President’s Message

As I prepare to write my column this week, I am reminded of that well-known saying - “a day/week is a long time in politics!” Julia Gillard has just been elected unopposed by the Federal Labour Party caucus to become Australia’s first female Prime Minister, with Wayne Swan as her Deputy.

I am also reflecting on the process we use for the election of our Local Government leaders, mayors and deputy mayors. As we know, our “party room” does not have the same opportunity that is afforded our state and federal elected members!

In Canberra last Friday, at the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) meeting, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced a further $120 million for a third round of the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP). All councils will participate in this latest announcement and should expect to receive an amount slightly less than that which was received for the second round of the program.

Applications will open on 5 July and close on 31 July. Work on approved projects will need to commence within six months of the signing of the agreement and will need to be completed by the end of 2012. Councils should expect to receive the guidelines in the next few days and will find that they are very similar to those that were circulated for the second round. I sincerely hope that an announcement of a federal election does not get in the way of this program being successfully implemented.

There is no doubt that the RLCIP has had considerable impact in many communities, both in Tasmania and across the nation, and has formed a very powerful way the importance the Federal Government places on Local Government, and the significance of the close working relationship that has been developed with the sector.

Working Together Reaps Rewards for Local Government

More than 400 of Australia’s 565 mayors met at Parliament House in Canberra last week with the Prime Minister and senior ministers, as part of the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG). During the meeting, mayors were given the opportunity to question the Prime Minister and senior ministers in a community cabinet-style format, before breaking into one-on-one and small group meetings with portfolio ministers.

The President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), Clr Geoff Lake, welcomed the close partnership that was continuing to develop between the national and local levels of government. “Over the past 18 months, councils have been delivering thousands of local projects worth more than $1 billion as part of the Rudd Government’s stimulus spending. This has been the single biggest injection of funds into local government in decades,” Clr Lake said. “Not only have these projects boosted local employment in communities across the nation, but they have provided the sort of community infrastructure which makes our suburbs, towns and rural areas much more liveable.”

Clr Lake presented the Prime Minister with a new publication showcasing a selection of the local projects funded under the stimulus package which demonstrate the strength of the emerging partnership between the two levels of government.

The benefits of working together as a sector and lobbying through strength of numbers were evident when the Prime Minister announced a further $100 million investment in community infrastructure. The $100 million will be shared between all councils, with each local government being allocated a similar amount of funding as in the last round of the RLCIP.

Need Cash? LGAT ASSIST Offers Competitive Interest Rates

Interest rates for LGAT ASSIST loans have been set at 8% for general purpose loans and 6% on special assistance loans. The new rates take effect from 11 August. Loans are available for staff members who are currently employed on a permanent basis by a member council of the LGAT, a Local Government Single or Joint Authority, or a Water and Sewerage Corporation within Tasmania, and who are current members of the Quadrant Superannuation Scheme. Application forms are available from pay supervisors.

More information on LGAT ASSIST can be found on the LGAT website at www.lgat.tas.gov.au. Go to ‘For Council Employees’, then ‘LGAT ASSIST’.
Tasmanian Food Security Fund Now Open
Up to $500,000 is now available through stage one of the Tasmanian Food Security Fund, to establish innovative responses across the state that will improve vulnerable Tasmanians’ access to a reliable supply of safe, nutritious and affordable food. The Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Food Security Council are seeking proposals from coalitions across community, government and business. Proposals can be valued up to $250,000 and must either directly address the production, storage, distribution, access or consumption of nutritious food, or developing monitoring and surveillance methods to measure food security in Tasmania. To download an information pack, visit www.dpac.tas.gov.au, or call the Community Nutrition Unit on 6222 7222.

Tougher Controls on Dangerous Dogs
Tougher controls on dangerous dogs will come into effect in Tasmania next month. Councils will have stronger powers to seize and detain dogs and new restrictions on breeds such as pit bull terriers will apply. Changes to the Dog Control Act 2000 will also enable local councils to deal more effectively with problem barking dogs. Micro-chipping of dogs will become compulsory from 1 July 2011. Amendments to the Dog Control Act were passed by Parliament in October last year. The State Government has been working closely with local councils and animal management officers to help with the implementation of the changes. Information has been provided to councils and will be mailed out with dog registration renewals and rates notices.

Premier’s Physical Activity Committee Local Government Forum (Launceston)
The next Premier’s Physical Activity Committee Local Government Forum will be held at the Launceston Aquatic Centre, from 10.00am – 3.00pm, on 23 July. Melissa Carlton, Australian Paralympian and Tasmanian Physical Activity Ambassador, will be the keynote speaker. Agenda and further details will soon be available. For enquiries, contact Emily Parker on 6233 5634. For information about PPAC, go to www.getmoving.tas.gov.au.

National Disability Awards 2010
Do you know of an individual, team or council that has challenged or lobbied and successfully implemented change by breaking down barriers faced by people with disability? If so, you are invited to submit a nomination for the National Disability Award in the Local Government category which recognises the achievements and hard work of individuals and teams within local governments. Nominations close on 16 July. Entering in the awards is easy. Download a nomination form and guidelines from www.idpwd.com.au, or call 1800 440 385.

Business and Industry Leaders Forum (Launceston)
The Federal Government has highlighted regional development as a key driver for Australia’s economic prosperity due to the significant growth of metropolitan cities within Australia. In response, the Tasmanian Government has made a commitment to developing regional planning, whilst aiming to maximise economic investment, productivity and innovation. Business and industry leaders are invited to attend a full-day forum, to be held on 30 June in Launceston, to discuss opportunities to maximise business investment, innovation and sustainability efforts in Northern Tasmania. To register, or for more information, visit www.ceda.com.au/events/eventdetails/2010/06/t100630.aspx?EventCode=T100630.

Essential Governance Workshop (Smithon, Devonport, Launceston, Hobart, Huonville)
By popular demand, a practical, two-part Essential Governance Workshop is being offered to increase your confidence, competence and professionalism and enable you to participate more effectively as a member of a not-for-profit community board or committee of management, and to enhance your understanding of your role, rights and responsibilities. This workshop is funded by Skills Tasmania and supported by Tasmanian Polytechnic, Women Tasmania and Self Help Workplace. The workshop will be held in Smithon, Devonport, Launceston, Hobart and Huonville. The cost is $15 (incl GST and refreshments). For enquiries, contact Marie Meakins on 6434 6462, or email marie.meakins@dpac.tas.gov.au.

Public Engagement in a Multi-Stakeholder World (Hobart)
Public engagement is a new way of thinking about how all levels of government work together with stakeholders and ordinary citizens to achieve a wide range of goals that it cannot achieve alone. It is based on a collaborative approach to tackling issues such as population health, adjustment to climate change, building a highly skilled labour force etc. A 1-day seminar, to be held on 5 July in Hobart, takes seriously the idea that a new generation of public processes is on the horizon, contrasting sharply with traditional consultation processes, which are increasingly part of the problem, rather than the solution! The workshop provides an overview and introduction to the Canadian Public Policy Forum’s approach to public engagement. For details, visit www.ttc.tas.gov.au, or call 6232 7511.

Upcoming Events
General Meeting, Launceston 23 July
General Management Committee Meeting, Launceston 29 July