President's Message

I am sure that most of the readers of the LGAT Newsletter would be aware that this year, the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) is celebrating their 60th Anniversary. A celebration dinner was held at the Old Parliament House in Canberra prior to the start of this year’s National General Assembly and was extremely well attended.

One of the attendees at the dinner was former National President of ALGWA, Kaele Way AM JP. Kaele has had a battle with her health for the past couple of years but a determined effort saw her enjoying the occasion very much. It was sad to receive news of her death last Friday, just twelve days after the celebration dinner. I first met Kaele when she was National President of ALGWA. As I sat as an observer at the ALGA board meetings, I found her to be an enthusiastic, friendly and welcoming person.

Kaele was elected to the City of Whitehorse Council in 1997 and served on a range of council organisations, and was State President of ALGWA Victorian Branch from 2002-2005. She was elected to the ALGWA National Board, serving as Vice-President from 2002-2004 and as National President from 2004-April 2009. Kaele worked tirelessly at federal, state and local levels to ensure that issues affecting women’s low participation in Australian Local Government were addressed. At all times Kaele encouraged and supported women to participate and become involved in Local Government.

Kaele will be missed in Local Government circles around the country and on behalf of the Tasmanian Local Government sector, I extend our sincere sympathy to her husband Alan, their family and friends.

Special Offer for LGE Health Plan

For Local Government Employees joining the LGE Health Plan in July, GMHBA Health Insurance is offering a no 2 and 6-month wait period for most services and a free $50 EFTPOS Gift Card. Details of this offer and the LGE Health Plan are available from www.health-link.com.au/lgat.

Working Together

The President and CEO of the Local Government Association and Chair of the Metropolitan Council Group met with their counterparts from the HIA, MBA, Property Council and TCCI last week to commence a dialogue on matters of common interest. Instigated by the Association, the forum focused largely on planning issues but future meetings will canvas other issues. It is clear that common positions may not be possible on all matters but the intent is to gain a better understanding of respective views and to collaborate on issues where there may be a common interest. The attendees have agreed to regular meetings with rotating hosting arrangements.

Water and Sewerage Cap Amended

The passage of the Water and Sewerage Amendment Bill through the Parliament was welcomed in the sense that it provided the necessary pricing framework agreed at the recent Special Meeting of the Association as well as amending the rate of return on existing assets downward to 3%, in accordance with the many representations by owner councils and the water corporations.

The Treasurer also acknowledged in her second reading speech the need for regulators to take into account the very infancy of the corporations and the challenges required in achieving absolute compliance early in their lives. The disappointing aspect of the Bill was that it was not seen by or discussed with the Association, nor was there any notification that it was even being tabled.

While it is acknowledged that there was some urgency about having the pricing and rate of return elements through the Parliament before the upcoming pricing determination by the regulator, some courtesies should still prevail in terms of the owners of the entities and their member organisation. LGAT has taken this matter up with the Treasurer in the context of the communication and consultation protocol that exists with the State Government.
Reducing Spikes in Property Valuations
The recent State Budget saw increased funding to help ease the spikes in Tasmanian property valuations. The State Government remains committed to reducing the property revaluation cycle from six years to less than three years. The shortening of this cycle will give greater certainty to businesses and individuals in relation to valuations of their properties which are used to set rates, land tax and water and sewerage charges. Funding increases announced for the Office of the Valuer General would ensure this work continues and funding was provided last financial year for three additional valuers to assist with quality assurance of revaluations. The Government is also undertaking a major review into valuation and municipal rating which is due for completion before the end of next year.

Auditor-General Report into Financial Viability
An Auditor-General report tabled in Parliament last week found no Tasmanian councils were financially unsustainable. The report examined the operations of councils, including their business units, and showed areas where councils can improve their financial performance and maintenance of existing assets. There were areas of concern for several councils in terms of ongoing operating deficits and maintenance of infrastructure. Current reforms in planning and long-term financial and asset management planning, as well as the review of valuation and rating systems, will improve the ability of all Tasmanian councils to plan for and manage assets effectively and deliver value for money to their communities.

Have your say - Tasmanian Seniors’ Policy
Individuals and organisations are invited to respond to the Future Directions: Seniors’ Policy for Tasmania Consultation Paper, a three-year plan being developed to establish priorities and action for the Government to progress during 2012-14. More information, including a copy of the paper and details on how to make a submission, can be found online at www.seniors.tas.gov.au. Submissions close on 12 August.

Making Healthy Choices in the Workplace
Paid workers in Tasmania can help make workplaces healthier and ward off chronic (long-term) disease, like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. All it takes is completing an anonymous online survey that asks about eating, physical activity, alcohol use, smoking and wellbeing. It will take about 10 -15 minutes to complete and there is also a draw to win a $75 Coles/Myer voucher! The survey will be open until 29 July and is supported by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), WorkCover Tasmania, Unions Tasmania, the University of Tasmania and the Premier’s Physical Activity Council. It can be found at www.surveymonkey.com/s/workplacehealth.

Medibank Active Tasmania Awards
Local councils, schools and community organisations from around the state are invited to enter their physical activity initiatives in the 2011 Medibank Active Tasmania Awards. There is $31 000 in prize money available across five major categories. The awards recognise the crucial role that Local Government, schools and community groups play in promoting and facilitating physical activity. Nominations close on 12 August. Entry forms and guidelines can be obtained from www.getmoving.tas.gov.au, or by phoning 1800 440026.

Facilitation Skills Training (Hobart)
From 18-19 July, the Groupwork Institute and Sustainable Living Tasmania will be presenting a two-day facilitation workshop. It will be highly practical and a balance between group work input and a focus on participants’ particular facilitation challenges. The cost is $345. To register, phone 6234 5566.

Achieving a Work/ Life Balance (Hobart)
A workshop conducted by The Training Consortium is being held in Hobart on 19 July to address meeting deadlines, competing work priorities and juggling work and personal goals and responsibilities. To register, visit www.tcc.tas.gov.au, or phone 6232 7255.

Assertiveness and Conflict Resolution (Launceston)
A course that will cover assertive behaviour, communicating ideas clearly and understanding causes of conflict and negotiating skilfully, will be held in Launceston from 28-29 July. Run by the Training Consortium, the cost to attend is $495. For further information, or to register, visit www.tcc.tas.gov.au or 6232 7255.

Upcoming Events
AGM/General Meeting, Hobart 20 July
Local Government Conference, Hobart 21-22 July