President’s Message

The ballot papers for this year’s Local Government elections hit the mailboxes around the State this week and if you are like me, and standing once again for election, we are all hoping that the electors are numbering the right boxes!

Looking back over the past two years it is surprising to me just how quickly that time has gone. When you sit down and think about it, every two years for the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor really is a very short period of time. Maybe this should be a matter for discussion when we start talking again about Local Government reform; all-in-all-out and three or four-year terms? Certainly it is something to think about!

Last week, I was approached by the ABC Stateline program whose reporters were thinking that the timing was right during this election period for them to air a segment on their Friday evening program on Local Government amalgamations. My response was that, since everyone else was weighing into the debate, they may as well have a go too! I advised them that the Association did not have a policy position on amalgamations and went on to say that we had long been an advocate for Local Government reform to improve council operations and the delivery of services and support to communities, and that we would continue to be involved in that space. Suffice to say that I was not required in the end but I know Allan Garcia did talk to them about resource sharing and the like.

We will continue to be pressured on the reform front from all quarters and I would think that the outcome of the STCA project will be viewed with a great deal of interest by other regions of the State.

I wish you all the best for the election.

$100 Million to Support Housing

Local councils in regional centres across Australia are being invited to apply for Australian Government funding to support more affordable housing in their communities and alleviate housing supply pressures. Councils in 47 regional centres have the opportunity to apply for a share in $100 million in funding under the Building Better Regional Cities Program. Applications close on 18 November. Further information is available from the Building Better Regional Cities Program at www.environment.gov.au/housing/bbrc/.

Carbon Relief for Smaller Landfills

The Federal Government has indicated that there would be no carbon price liability for landfill facilities with emissions of less than 25,000 tonnes of carbon pollution a year for at least the first three years of the carbon price mechanism. While this doesn’t exempt all Tasmanian landfills, it will come as a relief to smaller operations.

Local Government stakeholders advised the Government that due to existing waste disposal contracts, land use planning and other restrictions, the risk of diversion of waste is low. Smaller councils have also said that they were looking for certainty over whether smaller facilities would be covered by the carbon price mechanism. As a result of this feedback, the Government has decided that landfill facilities with direct emissions of less than 25,000 tonnes of CO2-e will not be covered under the carbon pricing mechanism at least until 2015-16.

The Climate Change Authority will be asked to review the issue no later than 2015-16, noting that the Government’s preference is to maintain the current arrangements unless there is clear evidence of waste diversion.

Water and Sewerage

Regional meetings were conducted around the State over the past week or so to provide access for officers to the Chairman of the Water and sewerage Corporations to detail his views on moving to a single corporation. The meetings were well attended with some good dialogue generated. Councils have been supplied with a template document, prepared by the Working Group appointed at the last LGAT General Meeting, for consideration at their next council meeting with a view to bringing a determined position to the LGAT General meeting on 16 November 2011. It is acknowledged that this is a challenging issue and one which councils will wish to satisfy themselves about fully prior to instigating a process for consolidation.
Changing the Constitution to Include Local Government

Council representatives and community members are invited to a community meeting on whether the Australian Constitution should be changed to recognise the role of Local Government. An Expert Panel has been asked to look at the level of support in Australia for changing the Constitution in this way. Panel Chair, the Hon James Spigelman AC QC, and panel members Senator Bob Brown and Sid Sidebottom MP, will attend the meeting to gather feedback on the level of support and the various forms that recognition of Local Government could take. The Expert Panel’s community meeting will be held from 6.00pm - 8.00pm on 25 October, at Launceston City Council, 18-28 St John Street. For more information, to make a submission, or to take the online survey, visit www.localgovrecognition.gov.au.

Tourism Grants

Tourism Tasmania is hosting a series of free, 2-hour workshops throughout Tasmania between 25 October and 8 November to help tourism operators and councils prepare their applications for the Australian Government’s next round of TQUAL tourism grants. Under the TQUAL Program, grants of up to $100,000 are available for suitable private sector and Local Government projects that stimulate sustainable economic growth through the creation of quality tourism products and experiences. The information sessions will be held in Launceston, St Helens, Westbury, Hobart, Huonville, Devonport, Burnie, Stanley, King Island and Queenstown. Full details can be found online at www.tourismtasmania.com.au/calendar. RSVP to david.saunderson@tourism.tas.gov.au.

Understanding Extreme Events in a Changing Climate

A new report from the Climate Futures for Tasmania Project has been launched by the State Government entitled Extreme Events. The report examines extreme events in the Tasmanian context to determine how climate change might alter the characteristics of natural disasters in the 21st century. According to the report, the pattern of extreme weather is likely to change across a broad range of climate factors. The report includes information on coastal vulnerabilities and projected climate change impacts on infrastructure - essential information for sea-level rise inundation mapping and regional planning by Local Government. The findings of the report will also be critical to informing Tasmania’s emergency management planning. The report can be found at www.climatechange.tas.gov.au.

National Youth Week Funding

National Youth Week (NYW) will be held between 13 April and 22 April 2012. Councils and community organisations are invited to apply for grants of up to $2,000 for standard events, or up to $5,000 for regional events. Grant applications will close on 14 November. Beyondblue funding opportunities may be available for NYW projects and events that promote and integrate the Youthbeyondblue messages of Look, Listen, Talk and Seek Help. For more information about NYW and beyondblue funding opportunities in Tasmania, contact the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Community Development Division on 6232 7052, or email Amy.Murphy@dpac.tas.gov.au.

Special Health Cover Offer for Local Government Employees

Local Government employees who switch their health cover to the Local Government Employees (LGE) Health Plan in October, can receive one month’s free cover and enjoy no waiting periods for most services which normally have 2 to 6 month waiting periods. If you already have cover with another health fund, you can simply switch to an equivalent policy with the LGE Health Plan and your cover will continue (no new waiting periods will apply). Remember, if you, or an eligible family member are hospitalised and pay the excess, the LGE Health Plan will refund it to you. For more information, or to receive a free, no obligation health cover recommendation and quote, visit www.health-link.com.au/lgat, call 1300 543 7526, or email to lgehp@health-link.com.au.

Investing in Sustainable Local Futures

Investing in Sustainable Local Futures: Proven Strategies for Communities, Councils and Businesses is being hosted on 27 October in Byron Bay, NSW. The event, organised by Energising Communities Ltd, features Australian and international speakers who have launched successful enterprises using alternative funding pathways. Among the highlights: visionary US Economist, Michael Shuman, will share his unique ideas on local economic models (via web); Hepburn Wind Community Officer, Taryn Lane will outline how a small community raised $13 million to develop its own wind farm; and Richard O’Leary, CEO, Macleay Regional Co-operative Ltd, will tell how the power of the community created one of Australia’s most successful share co-operatives. This event is aimed at community development, social planning, youth, disability and aged care officers of Local Government. Registration costs $165 (incl GST). For full details, or to register, go to www.energisingcommunities.org.au.

Upcoming Events

Local Government Election Polling Period

11-25 October