President’s Message

I was interested to note the Prime Minister’s announcement last week that it is her Government’s intention to take to the Australian people, a referendum question relating to the recognition of Australia’s first people in the Constitution.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) continues to progress the campaign for constitutional recognition of Local Government, a campaign that does enjoy the support of the Federal Government; you will recall the Government’s recent announcement of a $250,000 grant to ALGA to support the campaign. More recently, ALGA has established a sub-committee to drive the process.

I was in Canberra for the ALGA Annual General Meeting and Board Meeting last week and constitutional recognition of Local Government continues to be high on the agenda. There is no doubt that the campaign to achieve this recognition is one that will take considerably more time and much effort by all of us. There are no short cuts, we must get it right.

In recent weeks the ALGA President had a very positive meeting with the Shadow Minister for Local Government, Senator Barnaby Joyce, who confirmed his support for recognition in general (it is National Party policy!) and specifically for financial recognition, possibly with a change to Section 96 of the Constitution. He also indicated his willingness to speak in support of the issue in the Opposition Joint Party Room. Lobbying of all political parties and individual politicians continues to be a high priority.

Components of developing a campaign necessary to build support for a referendum will possibly include:

- Research to test public opinion and to identify messages necessary for effective communications;
- The upgrade of the ALGA website;
- Provision of materials for councils, including a toolkit for a local campaign, resource papers, draft media releases and stories; and
- The possible engagement of a high profile constitutional expert to present to State Association forums and conferences during 2011.

Whilst much effort will be placed on the campaign during 2011, ALGA has requested the State and Territory Associations to make contact with their governments and oppositions to ascertain where they stand with regard to the recognition of Local Government in the constitution.

Feedback so far would indicate that much more work is required in this arena. LGAT has met with the Premier who reconfirmed his support and other contacts will be made over the next few weeks.

Whenever a referendum is held, we can now be confident of two questions to be put to the Australian people. Will there be more?

New ALGA President Announced

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has elected a new President, Clr Genia McCaffery, at its Annual General Meeting held in Canberra last week. The Mayor of North Sydney, Clr McCaffery was previously President of the Local Government Association of New South Wales for six years and has been a Director of ALGA since 2006. Clr McCaffery has a Bachelor of Economics degree with Honours in Government from the University of Sydney and has worked in the areas of research, youth, unemployment and public advocacy. Clr McCaffery paid tribute to her predecessor, ALGA President, Clr Geoff Lake, describing him as “an energetic and hard-working advocate for Local Government.”


Australian Family Friendly Workplace Seminar

Australian organisations are increasingly attributing bottom-line performance to flexible work practices and employee satisfaction. The issue of family friendly workplace practices is one of increasing national concern and is summed up by Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, as “one of the hottest debates of our times”. The 2011 Australian Family Friendly Workplace Seminar, to be held from 7-8 March 2011, is a national two-day event that will feature Australia’s foremost experts in the areas of family friendly workplace practice and Australian organisations at the forefront of family-friendly practices will detail the design and implementation of their own proven strategies. HR practitioners and people in leadership roles are encouraged to attend. A $900 Regional Access Grant is available to regionally-based delegates who register by 22 December. For further information, visit www.wtaa.com.au/events/11/ff/Family_Friendly_Workplace_Seminar_2011_RAG.pdf.
Australian Local Government Women’s Association National Conference
From 25-27 November, the City of Ryde, in Sydney, will host the Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA) National Conference – ‘Women Going Places’. The three-day conference will include tours, workshops, forums and speakers that celebrate the 2010 Year of Women in Local Government with thought provoking themes such as Social Networking – Connecting with Community; Retiring to Nothing, and the role of quotas and targets in solving gender equity. For more information, visit www.algwa.net.au/files/M17WWORPA/ALGWA_program.pdf.

Webcast on improved building access
A webcast highlighting important changes to do with accessibility in building design and construction is now available. The webcast, produced by the Australian Building Codes Board, provides an overview of the ways in which the Disability Access to Premises – Buildings Standards (Premises Standards) will improve access to buildings and achieve consistency between building law and the Disability Discrimination Act. Adoption of these standards represents a move towards national consistency in accessibility requirements, which will generate greater certainty for practitioners in the design and construction of buildings while ensuring buildings are more accessible for people with disability and members of our ageing population. The changes are expected to take effect on 1 May 2011. The webcast is available at www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/buildings/webcast.html.

Public Sector Community Engagement Forum
Tonkin’s Public Sector Community Engagement Forum, to be held from 8-10 December in Sydney, will deliver effective, diversified community engagement strategies to enhance decision-making, policy and results, and discuss future directions for a whole of government approach to community engagement. Discover best practice in community engagement frameworks and strategies, explore the role of community engagement in disaster recovery, and find out how Web 2.0 and the social media is changing the face of community engagement. For more information, call (02) 9224 6060, or visit www.tonkincorporation.com/images/Eureka/GOV28ALGA.pdf.

Promoting Workplace Mental Health
Researchers are looking into ways of improving the psychological health of managers in small-medium businesses. The Business in Mind DVD program shows managers ways of approaching some of the stresses and challenges involved in running a business. The DVD will be distributed nationally within the small to medium business community and its effectiveness will be evaluated over three years. Topics covered in the program will include: signs of stress and helpful and unhelpful ways of managing it; using personal strengths to ‘bounce back’ from difficulties; tips on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a healthy work/life balance; improving communication skills and relationships with staff and customers to create a positive work environment; and ways of addressing mental health issues in the workplace. For further information, please email Michelle.Kilpatrick@utas.edu.au.

Tasmanian State Tax Review Address
The Tasmanian State Tax Review will provide an important opportunity for community input to developing a framework for future state taxation policy development and implementation. The report on Australia’s Future Tax System, provides a comprehensive context for consideration of a state taxation review, and highlights the need for understanding how state arrangements interact with those in other states, and at the Commonwealth level. A Tasmanian State Tax Review Address, chaired by Dr Ken Henry, Federal Secretary, Department of the Treasury, will be held from 12.00pm on 19 November, at Wrest Point, Hobart. Cost is $198 per person (incl GST), or $132 for CEDA members. To register, visit www.ceda.com.au.

Broadband for Society Summit
The impact broadband will have on how we live and work is set to be even greater than that of the introduction of electricity. Join some of the world’s leading experts in science, industry and policy as they examine ways of realising our broadband future at an international summit, hosted by CSIRO, at Wrest Point in Hobart, from 15-19 November. Register online at www.csirobroadband.com.

Art of Good Health and Wellbeing International Arts and Health Conference
Substantial evidence now exists to demonstrate that the arts can maintain and improve health and wellbeing for people of all ages - encompassing mental health, Aboriginal health, aged care, people with disabilities, young people, hospitals, public programs in museums and galleries, palliative care, social inclusion strategies, veteran’s health, workplace wellbeing programs and more. The 2nd Annual Art of Good Health and Wellbeing International Arts and Health Conference, to be held in Melbourne from 16-19 November, will feature 150 presentations and workshops and a diversity of international and Australian speakers. Register online at www.artsandhealth.org.

Upcoming Events

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<td>General Management Committee Meeting, Hobart</td>
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