President’s Message

Local Government has once again been in the media spotlight this week on issues around codes of conduct and planning. We are all aware of the review of the Code of Conduct and I trust that the Local Government Division, in mapping out their work priorities for 2011, will give this review the urgency it so desperately needs. In my opinion, and hopefully that of many elected members, the code has in some circumstances been used in a way that was never intended. If councils are required to continue to have a code of conduct in place, then it must be one that works and has some relevance.

Once again the Housing Industry Association, the Property Council and the Master Builders Association have ‘sharpened their knives’ on the State Government and Local Government over planning reform. The State Government may have taken some time to get planning reform moving but now there are three regional planning projects well advanced. Before their completion, the Property Council is suggesting there should be one scheme for the state because “regional strategies would be too difficult to make consistent”. Well, what a great suggestion to prolong the reform process!

There have been some extraordinary claims made in relation to delays with planning approvals and the consequential impact on costs. There will always be examples of where the approval process through council has not gone as smoothly as the applicant would have liked, however, data from the Local Government Division indicates that, on average, all councils are well within the 42-day statutory timeframe - this is a credit to Local Government.

On your behalf, I have stated in a media release that "councils are sick and tired of the erroneous and unsubstantiated claims of the three critical organisations, organisations whose members have a vested interest in obtaining decisions in their favour".

Elected members take their responsibilities very seriously, including their role when sitting as a Planning Authority, and it is unfair for organisations with vested interests to continue laying criticism when the system, even as it is, is delivering good results.

As this is the final newsletter for 2010, I wish you and your families a very happy Christmas. May it be a time of peace and goodwill. I look forward to working with you during 2011 as, together, we seek to further develop our communities.

Local Government Leaders Awarded

Twenty-two councils from across Australia, including three from Tasmania, were presented Bronze Awards at the inaugural Gender Equity Awards, held on 26 November, as part of the ALGWA 50:50 Vision - Councils for Gender Equity Program. Circular Head, Devonport City and Waratah-Wynyard Councils were among the first councils to achieve the Bronze Award and accreditation, and are looking forward to working towards the Silver Award, and then the prestigious Gold Award. The 50:50 Vision - Councils for Gender Equity Program is designed to bring about cultural and organisational change in councils – increasing the numbers of women in senior management roles and the level of representation of women on councils. For more details, go to 50:50vision.com.au.

Australian Regional Women Leaders Convention 2011

The Australian Regional Women Leaders Convention 2011, to be held in April 2011 in Melbourne, will feature a range of powerful sessions designed to increase the leadership capacity of regional women. Delegates will hear from some of Australia’s most successful and passionate regional advocates. The Convention Employer of Choice Program provides the opportunity for regional organisations to demonstrate their support for the advancement of their female staff by sending employees to the convention, and a limited number of subsidies are available. For successful applicants, 50% of the Convention Employer of Choice Program costs will be funded by the Workplace Training Advisory of Australia. View full details at www.wla.com.au/events/dm/11/rwlc/RWLC_EOC_2011.pdf.

National Urban Policy Discussion Paper

Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese has released for community feedback a discussion paper which will form the basis of Australia’s first ever National Urban Policy. Councils are encouraged to make a submission by 1 March 2011. For more information, go to www.infrastructure.gov.au.
National Road Safety Strategy
The release of the draft National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 is a step forward in reducing death and serious injury on Australia’s roads. The strategy focuses on a ‘safe systems’ approach to road safety, which takes a holistic view of all the factors which influence safety. Organisations with an interest in road safety are encouraged to have their say. The consultation period closes on 11 February 2011. The draft strategy and details on how to lodge feedback can be found on the Department of Infrastructure and Transport website at http://infrastructure.gov.au.

More Road Safety Levy Projects Announced
Infrastructure Minister Lara Giddings has announced a further $3 million worth of infrastructure projects to be funded from Tasmania’s Road Safety Levy this financial year. Funding from the Road Safety Levy is applied directly to road safety initiatives with the proven ability to reduce fatalities and serious injuries. The new projects to be funded across the state include: a $1 million safe system mid-barrier on the Brooker Highway at Granton; tactile line-marking on the Bass Highway between Launceston and Deloraine ($800 000); funding for Local Government – Shared Urban Spaces in Hobart and Devonport ($256,000); a safe system mid-barrier at Dilston ($200,000); motorcycle safety measures ($200,000); lower urban speed limit for vulnerable road users ($200,000); and preliminary design for new infrastructure projects ($300,000).

Safer Communities Initiatives Recognised
On 29 November, 18 recipients from around Australia were presented with prestigious Australian Safer Communities Awards at a ceremony held in Canberra. The Awards recognise emergency management initiatives that help to build safer communities across Australia. Among the recipients was Launceston City Council in partnership with the Launceston Flood Authority, which received a Highly Commended Award for the development of the Flood Education Kit – a resource that provides tips to protect family, pets and property. Further details are available at www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/mcclelland.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2010_FourthQuarter_29November2010-Safercommunitiesinitiativesrecognised.

Guideline for Promoting Compliance of Bus Stops
The Australian Human Rights Commission has released a guideline on those aspects of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) that relate to bus stops, following a period of extensive consultation with a wide range of individuals and organisations. The guideline for promoting compliance of bus stops with the DSAPT has been prepared by the Commission to assist bus stop providers to comply with the DSAPT. The guideline can be found at www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/standards/AHRC_Bus_Stops_Guidelines_November_2010.htm.

Mining Community Adaptation to Climate Change
The CSIRO is currently seeking input from Local Government bodies affected by mining operations about their preparations for climate change. Recently the CSIRO embarked on a project investigating adaptation to climate change within the Australian mining industry and its associated communities. The online survey is best answered by personnel within the council with knowledge about the types of impacts that climate related events have on the organisation. To complete the survey, go to http://tiny.cc/localgovsurvey. For more information, contact Barton Loechel on (07) 33274072, or email barton.loechel@csiro.au.

Gehl Plan to Make Hobart a City with People in Mind
Internationally recognised Urban Planner and Architect, Jan Gehl, has completed his commissioned study - the first stage of Hobart’s Inner City Development Plan. The study is titled Hobart 2010 Public Spaces and Public Life - a city with people in mind. The Council is planning a comprehensive consultation program for February and March 2011 to obtain feedback on the recommendations. The Gehl report is available online at hobartcity.com.au.

Green Money Website
The Find Green Money website provides easy access to comprehensive information about green funding opportunities. Green Money could be anything from a discount on a backyard worm farm offered by a local council to a Community Action Grant offered by the Federal Government. The site provides access to funding opportunities offered by Commonwealth, State, Local Government, and non-government organisations. For more information, go to www.findgreenmoney.com.au.

Strategy Addresses Stormwater Issues
A vital tool to help protect Tasmania’s waterways from the negative effects of stormwater runoff was recently launched by the Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage, David O’Byrne. The State Stormwater Strategy sets out key principles to reduce the impact of stormwater on our waterways. The strategy is based on best management practices currently in use at local, national and international levels and was developed in consultation with Local Government as a guidance document for professionals involved in urban development including planners, engineers, landscape architects, property developers and builders. For details, phone Jane Lovibond on 6233 7046.

Upcoming Events
General Management Committee Meeting, Hobart 16 December