President’s Message
There has been much discussion of late within community forums and the media in relation to councils providing overnight camping sites for recreational vehicles around the State, particularly since the release in October of a draft Directions Paper looking into the issue.

The tourism industry makes a very important and valued contribution to the Tasmanian economy, particularly in regional and remote areas. Each year, we eagerly welcome tourists from within the State and also from across Australia and internationally, as they come to enjoy the wonderful views, the natural environment and the hospitality that Tasmania has to offer. Our State is renowned for its beauty and has the advantage of being a compact holiday destination, ideal for those wishing to travel in caravans, motor-homes and other recreational vehicles as a means of making the most of their stay. It would be incredibly unfortunate if prospective visitors to the State were to decide not to come here based upon incorrect information about the implications of the recent review, so it is worth clarifying.

The development of the draft Directions Paper came about at the request of Local Government as a consequence of a workshop held earlier this year. Councils from around the State discussed the findings of the State’s independent Economic Regulator in four separate investigations that looked at councils that were providing free camping in areas where similar services were provided by private caravan parks.

In all investigations, the Economic Regulator found that the council was in contravention of national competition policy, a policy developed by the Federal and State Governments that seeks to place all levels of government, including Local Government, on a ‘level playing field’ with private businesses where they are providing services in competition with those businesses. It is important to note that councils are well placed to determine whether a need exists within their communities to provide camping sites for visitors.

Through the Association, Local Government has been working with the State Government to provide councils with some practical tools to assist them in meeting their obligations pursuant to the national competition policy, whilst still ensuring that they are able to work with their communities and local businesses to offer low cost camping options for recreational vehicle users.

Local Government does not support a process that threatens our ability to provide low-cost camping services for people travelling in self-contained vehicles. Councils across the State provide around 32 overnight camping sites and caravan parks for visitors, and a number of these already charge a low fee. Many council-provided overnight camping services are basic in nature, which means that even when council is operating on a level playing field with private operators, as is required under the national competition policy, the cost of utilising the council-run services is still likely to be lower than those parks that offer better-equipped services.

Councils are keen to work with their communities, local businesses, holiday-makers and the State Government to ensure that camping services are provided at the lowest possible prices. Councils are considering all of their options in this regard and will continue to work towards reaching an appropriate outcome to this issue.

As this is the final newsletter for 2011, may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and fun-filled, productive and successful New Year. The LGAT newsletter will return on 3 February 2012. See you then!

Elected Members’ Workshop
A weekend workshop for newly-elected members and those who wish to further develop their understanding of Local Government business, will be held at The Sebel in Launceston on 25-26 February. The workshop, coordinated by LGAT, will cover the fundamentals of council finance, asset management, the Local Government Act, land use planning, meeting procedures, effectively chairing meetings; and much more. A dinner to be held on the Saturday night will provide a valuable networking opportunity. The workshop program and registration form will be forwarded to all councils and elected members soon. Due to a heavy demand for accommodation in Launceston at that time of year, participants are must book their accommodation prior to 30 January to avoid missing out. Rooms cost $150 per night. To secure your room, please contact The Sebel on 6333 7555 and quote “LGAT Conference”. For workshop enquiries, please contact LGAT on 6233 5966.
Burnie City Council General Manager Resigns

After 11 and a half years, Burnie City Council General Manager, Mr Paul Arnold, has stepped down from his role to spend more time with his family. During this time, Mr Arnold and his Council team have overseen numerous improvements which have transformed the city. Burnie Mayor Steve Kons said, “On behalf of the entire Council we wish him the very best and thank him for his contribution to Burnie”. Andrew Wardlaw is currently serving as Acting General Manager until a new General Manager has been appointed.

Liveable Cities Program Funding

The Australian Government has developed the Liveable Cities Program to support state and local governments in meeting the challenges of improving the quality of life in our capitals and major regional cities. The Australian Government is seeking to encourage partnerships between the levels of government to foster innovative solutions to promote high quality urban design, improve the quality of open space and public places, address high levels of car dependency and traffic congestion and support cities in tackling the challenges of climate change. Local Governments are encouraged to submit applications for funding in partnership or collaboration with the other levels of government. For further information, go to www.nationbuildingprogram.gov.au/funding/liveablecities/index.aspx, or phone (02) 6274 6758.

National Awards for Local Government 2012

If you are proud of your Council’s innovative approach to meeting your community’s needs, enter now for the National Awards for Local Government. The Awards recognise, reward and promote the work of Local Government across Australia. They are an important component of the Government’s partnership with Local Government, showcasing unique local solutions to common problems. Local Government organisations have until 17 February 2012 to get their entries in. Award categories include: Active Arts; Asset and Financial Management; Energy Smart; Excellence in Alcohol Management; Improving Services to Remote Communities; Innovative Infrastructure Development; Youth Engagement and Participation; and others. More information can be found at www.regional.gov.au. For enquiries, phone 1800 065 113.

An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities

The urban design protocol, Creating Places for People, is a collaborative commitment to best practice urban design in Australia and the result of two years of collaboration between peak community and industry organisations, states, local governments, and the Australian Government. Creating Places for People does not take a one size fits all approach to designing cities, but broad principles for urban design that take into account the unique characteristics of a location, people’s enjoyment, experience and health, and encourages excellence and collaboration in the design and custodianship of urban places. The protocol will inform and equip government and industry practitioners involved in designing our cities and suburbs, and is available at www.urbandesign.gov.au.

Australia Day in the Office

Join in the Fun of Celebrating Australia Day in Your office or Workplace! Australia Day is a day to come together and celebrate what’s great about Australia and being Australian. The Australia Day Council is encouraging working Australians to share the celebration of our national day with work colleagues on 25 January. You could hold an Australia Day morning tea, have a BBQ lunch, or simply decorate your office to an Australia Day theme. Taking part in the Australia Day in the Office Program helps us recognise what’s great about our workmates and workplace, and to reflect on our national identity and recommit to making Australia an even better place. Registration is free and enables access to information and support materials, automatic entry to competitions and party packs of Aussie merchandise. For more information go to www.australiadayintheoffice.com.au.

The Heat is On

A new report prepared by the Climate Change Commission is warning that more Australians face dying in heatwaves and catching infectious diseases as a result of climate change. The report, The Critical Decade: a report from the Commission, says climate change-related injury, disease and deaths will continue to grow in decades to come unless sustained action is taken. It suggests climbing temperatures will lead to more natural disasters and changing rainfall patterns, which will impact on people’s health as much as on the environment. To access the report, go to http://climatecommission.gov.au/topics/the-critical-decade.

Get Ready for National Harmony Day Celebrations 2012

It is time to start planning for your Council’s events and activities to celebrate cultural diversity in March 2012. Harmony Day is celebrated around Australia on 21 March each year. It is a day where local councils across Australia are encouraged to celebrate cultural diversity at the municipal level. The day also marks the United Nation’s International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Harmony Day is managed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and gives people the opportunity to celebrate what makes each Australian unique and share what we have in common. For more information, go to www.harmony.gov.au/harmony-day/about-harmony-day.htm.
New Edition of Tasmanian Weed Handbook

A new edition of the evergreen publication, Tasmanian Weed Handbook, has been published by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), featuring the most important, or most commonly found weeds of crops and pastures in Tasmania. The book will assist landowners, farmers and field officers to identify weeds and is also a valuable resource for anyone interested in learning more about weeds in Tasmania. First published in 1975, the handbook has become a key reference book for those seeking to identify weeds. The latest edition has been reviewed and updated with new information while still retaining the impressive collection of detailed, hand-drawn images. Copies of the Tasmanian Weed Handbook can be obtained free of charge by contacting DPIPWE on 6336 5444.

Exclusive Offer for Local Government Employees

If you’re considering joining or switching your health cover to the Local Government Employees (LGE) Health Plan, December is a great month to make the change. During December, Local Government employees who join a hospital and extras cover through the LGE Health Plan can receive one month’s free cover and enjoy no waiting periods for most services which normally have two and six-month waiting times. Even if you just join hospital cover, or extras cover, you will still receive one month’s free membership. 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). The LGE Health Plan lets you join a health cover with a hospital excess - so you save with much lower premiums. Then, 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, visit www.health-link.com.au/lgehp, or call 1300 543 7526.

New Tasmanian Heritage Council Chair

The Tasmanian Heritage Council has a new chairperson. Dr Dianne Snowden has been appointed for a three-year term and takes up the role on 1 January 2012. Dr Snowden is a notable Tasmanian-educated historian, who has made a significant contribution to the field of historic heritage and the wider community. Dr Snowden replaces outgoing Chairman, Mr Michael Lynch, who served in this capacity for the past six years. The appointment of members to the new Heritage Council will now commence and a decision on the full Council make-up is expected to be made by late-December.

Review of Tasmanian Climate Action Council

Public comment is sought on the future of Tasmanian Climate Action Council. The Council is being reviewed as part of the first four-yearly independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008. The independent Tasmanian Climate Action Council is an important source of advice to the Government on climate change, providing high-quality advice in areas such as emission reduction opportunities, renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate change adaptation. The independent review of the Tasmanian Climate Action Council will be undertaken by John Ramsay and Associates Pty Ltd. Public comment is invited on discussion questions and should be sent to Mr John Ramsay at jaramsay@bigpond.net.au, or PO Box 404, Sandy Bay, TAS 7006. Submissions close on 16 December. For more information, visit www.dpac.tas.gov.au/climatechange.

STOP. REST. PLAY. – a Public Art Project

What do you do when you bring your children to Hobart? Do you think the Hobart CBD is a child-friendly space? STOP. REST. PLAY. is a temporary public artwork, located at 126 Murray Street (opposite the State Library), that offers a temporary space for parents and children in Hobart CBD. Parents and their children are invited to join a program of activities, and play with ideas about a better city that caters for better spaces of encounter, not necessarily ruled by consumerist activity. Members of the community are invited to stop and think about the city and how it can become more child-friendly. Access to the space is free. STOP. REST. PLAY. will conclude on 17 December. Times and the full program of activities can be found at www.cwa-cbdbranch.com. For further information, contact Paula Silva on mobile 0400 865 207, or email psilva@utas.edu.au.

Your Community Heritage Program

The Australian Government has opened the Your Community Heritage Program - a new approach to supporting and protecting Australia’s heritage that will enable local communities around Australia to celebrate their local heritage. The program recognises that our heritage is not just about ‘big’ heritage, it is also about the heritage of individual communities across the country. Your Community Heritage is about broadening our understanding and support of heritage and the organisations, individuals, volunteers and communities who protect and manage so many of our unique heritage places and stories. It will promote the importance of heritage to the community and its role in bringing people together, creating community identity and a sense of pride. Under the program, communities can apply for grants to protect and conserve Australia’s nationally significant sites, repair local historic places impacted by natural disasters and to identify, research, preserve and share their local heritage stories. The program is open to all community groups, not just those who have traditionally been involved with heritage projects. Funding available for heritage projects will range from $2,500 to $500,000. Applications close on 20 December. For more information, visit www.environment.gov.au/heritage/programs/ych/apply.html.
Working with People with Co-Existing Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug Issues
The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council is conducting a survey to assess the training needs of the broader non-government and government organisations working with people with co-existing mental health and alcohol and drug issues. The information gathered from the survey will be used to inform the development of a cross sector training package for workers in this area. The survey takes approximately 10 minutes and is completely confidential. The ATDC is offering a $300 Harvey Norman Gift Voucher to one randomly selected respondent. You are invited to complete the survey by visiting www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?FCD8B4A5F8BA9F8. For enquiries, contact Amanda Street at amandas@atdc.org.au or phone 6224 7780.

Conferences, Workshops and Seminars

Government Communications Australia Conference (Melbourne)
The 20th Annual Government Communications Australia Conference will take place in Melbourne from 29 February to 2 March 2012. Gerry McCusker of Engage ORM will host a half-day immersion into social media communications and marketing, with tools specifically for Local Government. There will also be presentations and case studies covering: social media; mobile digital applications; community engagement and strategy; event management and marketing; communicating change; media relations and writing; and crisis communication. Early Bird Registrations close on 31 December. Register online at www.govcomms.com.au.

Effective Public Participation (Hobart)
The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) views public participation as any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision-making and uses public input to make better decisions. Whether we use the term participation, communication, education, it does not matter as it is all about ‘engagement’. Taking Action, a licensed provider to IAP2, will conduct three modules of the IAP2 program in Hobart: Planning for Effective Public Participation (21-22 February); Communication for Effective Public Participation (23 February); and Techniques for Effective Public Participation (20-21 March). Upon completion of all three modules, students will be awarded a Certificate in Public Participation from IAP2. 10% discount is offered for early registrations. For more information, visit www.takingaction.com.au, or phone (02) 9531 2870.

Upcoming Events

Elected Members Workshop, Launceston 25-26 February 2012

The LGAT office will close for Christmas on 23 December and will reopen on 3 January.