President’s Message

Recently I attended a meeting of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). LGAT Vice President Mayor Barry Easther and I are members of the ALGA Board, which includes representatives from all states and territories.

One of the agenda items discussed at some length was the Federal election to be held in 2007. Whilst there are a number of scenarios regarding the timing of the election it was reassuring to be involved with ALGA’s strategic planning process, which includes lobbying the Federal Government for increased funding. ALGA President Cr Paul Bell outlined the strategy and I was impressed with the tremendous amount of work that has already been undertaken by ALGA staff.

Whilst at a local level elected members are more concerned (and justifiably so) about local rates, operational and strategic plans, capital works, budgets, community issues etc, the time, resources and capacity to generate extra finances for Local Government realistically falls to the success of political lobbying capacity in Canberra.

The Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA) on cost shifting and Roads to Recovery (R2R) fund are prime examples of ALGA’s past successful lobbying efforts. Without ALGA’s input and pressure Local Government would not receive this commitment or funding.

The recent PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) national financial sustainability study identifies a number of issues experienced by Local Government regarding infrastructure renewal and maintenance. One of the recommendations highlights the need for extra funding for infrastructure.

All politicians should be aware of the national situation and hopefully Liberal and Labor parties will announce funding proposals and strategies for Local Government as part of their election campaigns. If ALGA’s lobbying is successful it will definitely have positive outcomes for our sector and individual councils.

Another of the agenda items was in reference to the location of the 2007 ALGA conference. Generally, ALGA conferences are held in Canberra. However, in recognition of the Northern Territory’s Year of the Outback, the conference is heading north, and in November 2007 will be held in Darwin. I would encourage councils to consider budget implications in the next financial year to cater for those staff and elected members wishing to be involved.

2007 Local Government Awards For Excellence

Nominations are invited for the 2007 Tasmanian Local Government Awards for Excellence. The awards are presented for projects, large and small, with an internal or external focus, that benefit the community and promote a better future for Tasmania. As well as recognising outstanding efforts, the awards aim to promote sharing of good management practices and effective responses to community needs. Award categories include: Building Better Futures Through Governance; Developing Council People; Innovation and Creativity; Invigorating Communities; and Sustainable Community Assets. The 2007 Awards for Excellence will be presented on 31 May at the City Hall. For further information or to download a copy of the entry form go to http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=208

Road Funding

Federal Cabinet is soon to hold crucial discussions on the future of Commonwealth funding for Australia’s road network, including council-maintained local roads.

Cabinet is scheduled to discuss the make-up of the Commonwealth’s road funding programs after 2009, which marks the conclusion of its current ‘AusLink’ package of road programs, including several that fund council road projects such as the Roads to Recovery, Black Spot and Strategic Regional programs.

Cabinet discussions will revolve around the design of ‘AusLink 2’ - the five-year package of Commonwealth road funding programs that will come into operation after mid-2009.

Roads to Recovery is currently due to expire in mid-2009, while the Black Spot program has not been funded beyond mid-2008. The Strategic Regional Program has involved a series of one-off funding rounds with no government commitment as yet for future funding allocations.

Tasmanian Leaders Program

The Tasmanian Government is encouraging emerging leaders from around the State to apply for the Tasmanian Leaders program. Participants are offered the opportunity to enhance and develop their leadership capacity, and to learn from a cross-section of Australia’s leaders. Applications close on Friday, March 9 and the program will commence on Friday, May 4. For further information or to apply, contact the Program Manager on 6233 5716, email info@tasmanianleaders.org.au or visit www.tasmanianleaders.org.au.
National Water Charging Stocktake
The first national stocktake of water charging policies in urban and rural water sectors has been released by the National Water Commission. The stocktake is the first step in developing consistent approaches to the way water charges are set across Australia - a key objective of the National Water Initiative (NWI). Approaches to recovery of capital expenditure in urban and rural water sectors, approaches to charging customers for urban water services, and approaches to identifying and recovering the costs of water planning and management are areas where significant differences are noted. In order to address these key areas of difference, issues papers are being developed by the NWI Steering Group on Water Charging, chaired by the National Water Commission—these issues papers will provide further insight into the complexities of approaches to water charging and where further collaboration is required. An executive summary and water stocktake reports addressing three key areas—rural water charging, urban water charging and water planning and management—are available from the National Water Commission website at www.nwc.gov.au/nwi/consistency_in_water_charging.cfm

LG Economic Development Guidelines
A new set of guidelines for local governments that assist with the successful implementation of economic development strategies has been released in Queensland. The project to develop the guidelines has sought to break down the complex technical issues associated with economic and regional development into practical, easy-to-understand guidance that can be integrated into councils' day-to-day business. The guidelines are expected to be available shortly on the LGAQ's website http://www.lgaq.asn.au under the 'Publications' section.

Economic Development Australia E-Journal
Economic Development Australia (EDA) has released its first e-journal examining a range of strategies and initiatives which are being undertaken by councils and regional development bodies. The Economic Development Journal is a quarterly e-publication, which will be released in February, May, August and November. The first publication is accessible on the EDA's website www.edaustralia.com.au, but future editions will only be available to members.

Tasmanian Business Leaders Awards
The Tasmanian Business Leaders Awards recognise Tasmania's best leaders for their visionary leadership, innovation, best practice and their contribution to the community. The Tasmanian Business Leaders Awards were developed in conjunction with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Australian Institute of Management and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. For more information on the awards, call Robyn Martin from the TCCI on 6236 3600. Nominations close 18 April 2007.

Tourism Impact Model
The Tourism Impact Model (TIM) provides a free service to local councils so that they can assess the economic impact of tourism on their local area. TIM was initially developed in 2004, but has been redeveloped to make it more user friendly and easy to operate. The new TIM model allows internet based access and functionality and allows councils to assess multiple projects and compare the financial impact of several proposals or scenarios. TIM allows councils to assess the economic impact of tourism and may also be a useful tool to help proponents develop applications for the Australian Tourism Development Program (ATDP). Further information on TIM and on ATDP can be found on www.industry.gov.au. Round 4 ATDP opens in mid 2007.

The Get Moving Tasmania Website
The Get Moving Tasmania website is an initiative of the Premier's Physical Activity Council. The website provides access to information that assists in the promotion and provision of opportunities for physical activity in Tasmania. The website includes information on the Premier's Physical Activity Council and initiatives, Tasmanian physical activity events and initiatives, what physical activity is and what are the national recommendations for participation, individual and community benefits of engaging in physical activity and much more. To access the site go to www.getmoving.tas.gov.au.

National Urban Design Strategies Conference
The Urban Design Strategies Conference 2007 will be held on April 17-18 in Melbourne at Federation Square. The conference will address environmental and safety aspects of good design, the promoting of culture and site got to project itself into the future. For further information refer to http://www.halledit.com.au/conferences/details.php?id=56.

Office Professional of the Year Award
The Australian Institute of Office Professionals of the Year Awards promote and recognise excellence within the profession. They give employers an opportunity to promote the excellence of their office support staff, as well as publicly recognising the contribution they make. There are two award categories – Senior and Junior Office Professionals of the Year. For further information, email Debbie Marshall - debbie.marshall@development.tas.gov.au

Upcoming Events
Elected Members Weekend Workshop
General Meeting
General Management Committee Meeting
Local Government Sustainability Workshop
Elected Members IT Workshop
Elected Members IT Workshop

Bridport, 3-4 March
Launceston, 7 March
Launceston, 7 March
Launceston, 8 March
Burnie, 17 March
Launceston, 18 March