President’s Message

This week, I attended the Australian Council of Local Government Steering Committee (ACLG) meeting in Canberra. The agenda included a discussion on a potential program for the next ACLG meeting in Canberra, on Friday, 18 June, and reports on the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP) and the Local Government Reform Fund (LGRF).

This year’s meeting of the ACLG will commence with a dinner on the Thursday evening and, as you are no doubt aware, the preceding days will be taken up with the National General Assembly of Local Government. Although this means a week in Canberra, I do recommend that consideration is given to attending the General Assembly this year. This is a very important time in Local Government and I know that the experience gained from attending the assembly will be of great benefit.

A report on the RLCIP noted that many projects had already been completed and many more were on the way. Minister Albanese was quite pleased with this progress and commented that more than $1 billion has been made available to Local Government authorities to build and modernise community infrastructure.

Concern was expressed that, in some cases, there was a lack of information contained in applications, with some 10% not even meeting the guidelines. In addition, quite a large percentage of applications did not offer a contribution; these were easy to deal with, as they were immediately discarded! I am providing this information because it is important to realise that programs offered by the Federal Government must not be taken for granted and great care must be given to the preparation of applications.

Finally, Minister Albanese advised that he had approved LGRF for some of Tasmania’s projects, with an announcement to be made shortly. It would therefore appear that the projects discussed at the last General Meeting are not far away from being confirmed.

Until next time....

Local Government Conference

Be sure to register for the 2010 Local Government Conference, to be held at Wrest Point in Hobart, from 12-14 May. The conference theme, Up Up Up – a Focus on Excellence and Innovation, highlights the necessity for Local Government to strive for improvement in all areas of council business, and the conference will provide valuable insight on how to achieve it.

Plenary speakers include:
- Dominic Thurbon - Flip! How Counterintuitive Thinking is Changing Everything;
- Assoc Prof Dr Carol Boyle of New Zealand – Pathways to Sustainable Infrastructure;
- Geoff Willis – Progress and Challenges in the Water and Sewerage Corporations;
- Fae Robinson – Building Community Advantage through Values; and
- Prof Graham Sansom – Pursuing Excellence: New Wine and New Bottles.

Workshop presenters include:
- Brad Wynter – Building an Innovative Community Using Broadband and Social Media;
- Dr Ingrid Burkett – Social Innovation: the Best Place to Start is Locally!;
- Diane Tompson – The Challenges of Recruiting and Keeping Skilled Personnel;
- Tim Gardner and Chris Cartledge – Thinking Outside the Square – Innovative Partnering Models for Local Road Maintenance;
- Prof Niki Ellis – Improving Health and Productivity through Attention to Job Design and People Management;
- Stephanie Knox – Healthy by Design – Excellence in Planning and Designing Environments for Active Living;
- Prof Mark Evans – Leading the Local State – What Skills Local Government Leaders Say They Need and Why; and
- Assoc Prof Dr Carol Boyle – Planning for Sustainable Infrastructure.

The 2010 Local Government Conference is sponsored by Civic Mutual Plus, Bistec Tasmania, Commonwealth Bank, Marsh, Pitt and Sherry, Technology One, Thorn Lighting, and the Area Consultative Committee Tas.

The Conference Program and Registration Form will be available online from Monday, 22 March at www.lgat.tas.gov.au. Hard copies will be mailed to all councils and elected members later in the week.
New GM for Break O’ Day
Des Jennings commenced as the new General Manager with Break O’Day Council on 15 March, having relocated from Streaky Bay Council in SA where he was the CEO. Des has 33 years experience in Local Government and brings with him great vision for the Break O’Day community. Mr Jennings’ appointment follows the retirement of former General Manager, Tony Walker, after 40 years working in the sector and almost 23 years with Break O’Day Council.

The Health Benefits of Flexible Working Hours
New evidence has emerged to suggest that workers who are able to have input into the way their hours are structured might experience tangible health benefits. A recent review by researchers for the Cochrane Collaboration highlight the potential health benefits associated with current trends towards more flexible work hours in the UK and Europe. The Cochrane Systematic Review has shown that self-scheduling has positive impacts on blood pressure, sleep and mental health. A full copy of the review is available at www.mrw.interscience.wiley.com/cochrane/clsysrev/articles/CD008009/frame.html.

Not Enough Women in Council Manager Positions
Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) have instigated a major review of Local Government recruitment statistics which has shown that women are generally more successful than men when applying for senior council management positions. The low number of women who actually apply for such jobs, however, is leading to a lack of women who end up working at senior levels. The review found that for every woman who applied for a council CEO, director or manager position, more than four men applied for the same role. However, nearly one in every three women who were interviewed for such roles were successful in securing the position. LGMA National President, Neil Hartley, urges councils to do more to encourage women to apply for top roles.

MAV National Environment Conference: Transitioning to a Climate Resilient Future
From 15-16 April, the Municipal Association of Victoria’s (MAV) inaugural National Environment Conference, in Melbourne, will consider climate change challenges and opportunities in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and adjustment for Local Government. Transitioning to a climate resilient future will provide an opportunity to explore climate change responses and case studies from across Australia in a range of areas including the built environment, natural resource management, water, energy, communities, health, coastal planning and agriculture. For further details, go to www.mav.asn.au/enviro2010, or register at www.mav.asn.au/enviro2010.

National Awards for Local Government
Nominations have opened for the 2010 National Awards for Local Government. These prestigious awards, now in their 25th year, reward local governments for the innovative and important work they do in supporting local communities. The National Awards are an important plank of the Federal Government’s partnership with Local Government. All councils are encouraged to submit entries that showcase best practice local projects and policies. Entries close on 31 March. For further details, phone 1800 065 113, or visit www.infrastructure.gov.au/local/awards.

Behind the Wheel
Local Government officers who drive for work are invited to undertake a defensive driving course. Sessions will be held at Symmons Plains (30 March) and at Baskerville (15 April). Cost is $355. For further information, visit www.ttc.tas.gov.au, or phone the Tasmanian Training Consortium on 6232 7255.

Communication Profiling for Southern Tasmanian Local Councils
Develop interpersonal skills for recognising communication styles in others and gain a better understanding of why people act the way they do. Obtain personal feedback on how others view your normal style of communicating as you earn the keys to effective two-way communication at this 2-day workshop for managers, customer service and marketing staff. Cost is $500 (+ GST). For further details, visit www.highperftraining.com.au, or phone 1300 759 313.

Australian Regional Women Leaders Convention 2010
Celebrate regional leadership with like-minded women from all over Australia from 19-20 April in Melbourne, at the Australian Regional Women Leaders Convention 2010. This bi-annual event provides the opportunity to discuss important regional and rural issues, and to network with business and community leaders from across the country. Community Access Subsidies are available. For further details, phone Dominic Meachen on 1300 138 037, or go to www.wla.com.au/events/dm/10/nwlc/Regional_Women_Leaders_Convention_2010_CAS.pdf.

Upcoming Events
- AGM, General Meeting, GMC Meeting, Hobart 12 May
- Local Government Conference, Hobart 12-14 May

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