President’s Message

At the ALGA Board meeting last week, much time was spent in considering the matter of constitutional recognition of Local Government. This is a major task for ALGA and a good deal has been achieved, but there is much more work to be done to ensure that our local communities and politicians, both State and Federal, give their support to the proposed change to our constitution.

In February, the President of ALGA, Mayor Genia McCaffery, wrote to all mayors advising of the progress to date and inviting all councils to become directly engaged in the campaign for constitutional recognition.

It is anticipated that the referendum will most likely be held in conjunction with the 2013 Federal Election. The challenge for Local Government is to ensure the referendum is held, that the type of recognition sought meets our requirements and that we achieve a positive result. What is being sought is a simple change to the constitution, most likely to Section 96, which would allow direct funding from the Federal Government to Local Government to continue. The need for this was highlighted in the 2009 decision of the High Court in Pape v Federal Commissioner of Taxation where the High Court set out the limitations of the Australian Government’s powers, clearly indicating that it does not have the power to fund Local Government directly.

I do urge your council to give serious consideration to the requests contained in President McCaffery’s February letter, pass a supportive resolution at an upcoming meeting of council and make contact with your political representatives seeking their support for constitutional recognition of Local Government.

Yesterday, together with the CEO, I met with our Premier to discuss this important issue and appointments have been arranged to meet with the Greens and Liberal Party as it is imperative that we have bipartisan support.

It is ALGA’s intention that a Constitutional Declaration for Councils will be submitted for signature by council representatives at the conclusion of this year’s National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra on 22 June. It is ALGA’s objective that all councils will be in a position to sign the Declaration supporting financial recognition at that time.

I look forward to your active involvement in the campaign for constitutional recognition.

Disaster Relief Policy Activated

Premier Lara Giddings activated the Local Government Disaster Relief Policy this week to assist northern communities affected by recent flooding. The Launceston City, Break O’Day, Northern Midlands and Dorset Councils were all affected by floods that occurred between 23 and 24 March. Preliminary estimates suggest that there has been significant damage to road and bridge infrastructure across the region and the affected councils now face a significant repair bill. The policy allows councils to claim between 50-75% of the cost of their infrastructure damage, once the damage bill exceeds a certain proportion of the Council’s revenue.

Staff from the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources are still working to assess the full extent of the infrastructure damage but in the Break O’Day municipality, it is estimated 27 roads and 3 bridges are in need of repair. The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment has also been working closely with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association to assess the impact of flooding on primary producers.

CMP Meetings

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Insurance will be conducting two CMP Consultative Committee meetings in Tasmania during April. Interested officers are welcome to attend to provide feedback to MAV on its product offerings and performance. Agenda items will include an insurance market update, CMP rebranding, claim trends, risk management review, 2012 contributions and improving emergency management. The meetings, to commence at 11.00am, will be held at the Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston on 7 April, and at the Hobart Town Hall on 8 April. To register, contact Simon Morgan on (03) 9667 5538, or email smorgan@mav.asn.au.
Program Guidelines Released for Regional Development Australia Fund
The Federal Government has released the program guidelines for the Regional Development Australia Fund - a $1 billion, five-year program that will boost economic and community development. The fund is part of a $1.4 billion commitment to regional Australia, announced in March, and is for projects that help skill Australia, lift productivity, maximise the opportunity of broadband, sustain our environment, promote social inclusion and improve water and energy efficiency. Only applications that have been endorsed by the local Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees and fit with RDA regional plans will be considered. Examples of projects that could be funded include regional economic infrastructure projects and community infrastructure such as sporting facilities or childcare centres. Funding for projects will commence on 1 July with applications for the first funding round of up to $100 million closing on 13 May. There will be a further funding round announced later this year. The program guidelines can be found at www.regional.gov.au/regional/programs/rdaf.aspx.

2011 Local Government Awards for Excellence
Tasmanian councils are invited to enter in the 2011 Local Government Awards for Excellence. The awards are presented for projects, large or small, with an internal or external focus, that benefit the community and promote a better future for Tasmania. As well as celebrating outstanding efforts, the awards aim to promote sharing of good management practices and effective responses to community needs. Council initiatives that demonstrate excellence in any of the four award categories are eligible for entry; Delivering Excellence for our Communities; Delivering Excellence for our People; Delivering Excellence in Natural and Built Environments; and Demonstrating Operational Excellence. Nominations close at 5.00pm on 2 May. For a copy of the 2011 Awards for Excellence Entry Form and Guidelines, please visit www.lgat.tas.gov.au, or email fiona.madigan@lgat.tas.gov.au.

Renewable Energy Fund - King and Flinders Islands
Applications are invited for the Renewable Energy Fund - King and Flinders Islands. The objectives are to: reduce reliance on diesel generated electricity on the Bass Strait Islands (BSI) by means of renewable energy technology innovation; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce energy costs to residents and businesses on the BSI; encourage the development and uptake of economical small scale renewable energy innovations on the BSI; and to complement existing Australian, Tasmanian or Local Government policies and strategies on renewable energy. King Island and Flinders Councils and individuals with homes or businesses on either BSI are eligible to apply. Applications close on 20 May. For further details, visit www.dier.tas.gov.au/energy/renewable_energy_fund.

Supporting Cycling for Transport
The Minister for Sustainable Transport, Nick McKim, has announced the creation of a fund to support cycling for transport. The fund will be available for infrastructure planning and concept development, and initiatives including road improvements to increase safety for cyclists on commuter routes, projects that help people mix cycling and public transport and ‘end of trip’ facilities such as bicycle storage and lockers to store gear. The fund provides $150,000 over two years and is open to Local Government organisations and not-for-profit community-based organisations on a shared contribution basis. Submissions are required by 3 June. Further information is available at www.dier.tas.gov.au/latest_news.

Guideline on the application of the Premises Standards
The Disability (Access to Premises - buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth) (Premises Standards) commence on 1 May. The introduction of the Premises Standards will lead to widespread and important improvements in the accessibility and safety of all new and upgraded buildings that it covers throughout Australia. These changes will improve the opportunities for people with disability to participate in and contribute to the economic, cultural, social and political life of our community as equal citizens. The changes will require the development of new skills, knowledge and approaches from developers, designers and architects, builders, project managers, certifiers and building operators. The Australian Human Rights Commission has issued a Guideline on the application of the Premises Standards to assist in their application - available online at www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/standards/PSguide.html.

National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme
Governments and peak television and computer industry associations are committed to reducing the amount of e-waste going to landfill. To help achieve this, the Australian Government will soon introduce product stewardship legislation into Parliament to enable the launch of an industry-run television and computer collection and recycling scheme by the end of 2011. The aim of the scheme is to achieve a collection for recycling rate of 80% by 2021. Under the scheme, liable television and computer manufacturers and importers will fund the collection and recycling of end-of-life products. Australian Government regulation will underpin the scheme and set the outcomes to be met. Householders and small business will be able to recycle end-of-life televisions, computers and computer peripherals through the industry determined method of collection free of charge. A consultation paper is available for public comment until 8 April at www.environment.gov.au/wastepolicy.
Australia's Biggest Morning Tea
Last year, 850 hosts across the state raised over $330,000 through Australia's Biggest Morning Tea to support the vital work of Cancer Council Tasmania. Based on population, Tasmanians raise more per head than any other state in the country. To get involved, host a morning tea any time throughout May or June, invite your guests to help raise funds to support the fight against cancer. Register online at www.biggestmorningtea.com.au, or phone 6233 2030.

Public Sector Management Program (Burnie, Launceston, Hobart)
The Public Sector Management Program (PSM Program) is an 18-month, tertiary level management education program aimed at front line managers from middle to senior levels in Commonwealth, State and Local Government. The program incorporates the latest developments in public sector management and theory and has been developed to offer participant centred, flexible and varied learning opportunities to a diverse student population. It is administered on behalf of the Tasmanian Local Leadership Group by The Training Consortium, Public Sector Management Office, and Department of Premier and Cabinet. Free information sessions will be held in Burnie (6 April), in Launceston (7 April), and in Hobart (13 April). For details, visit www.psmprogram.tas.gov.au, or phone 6232 7544.

Healthy Community Awards
Entries are invited for the Heart Foundation Healthy Community Awards. The awards recognise councils for their contribution to improving heart health and aim to encourage their ongoing commitment to creating healthy communities. Participants will also be in the running to receive part of the $38,000 in cash awards. Councils are invited to enter initiatives which provide: opportunities for recreational and incidental physical activity; safe, connected, walkable catchments; accessible, safe and appealing environments and facilities that encourage healthy lifestyles; access to affordable healthy foods; and smoke-free environments. Entries close on 27 May. For details, contact Sally Barns on 6336 5116 or visit www.heartfoundation.org.au.

ALGWA 60th Birthday Dinner Celebration
The Australian Local Government Women’s Association invite you for dinner to celebrate 60 years of supporting women elected to and working in the Local Government sector from 7pm on 19 June at the Old Parliament House in Canberra. Enjoy a memorable evening of celebration following the Australian Local Governments Association’s National Congress. To register, visit www.algwa.com.au.

Conferences and Seminars
Public Works Management Conference 2011 (Melbourne)
Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (Victoria Division) invites CEO’s, directors, senior managers, project managers and engineers involved in delivering and planning infrastructure works and services to the Public Works Management Conference, to be held from 11-12 May in Melbourne. Register before 8 April to go into a draw to win an electronic book device. Download the full program from www.ipwea.theconferencemanager.com.au.

NSW Sustainable Development Conference 2011 (Sydney)
Sustainability now needs to be integrated into all forms of building and infrastructure. This includes new developments currently being planned, as well as retrofitting existing buildings and infrastructure. The NSW Sustainable Development Conference, to be held on 8-9 June in Sydney, will bring together decision-makers from the private and public sectors to discuss the current and future directions required for planning to achieve sustainable outcomes in Federal and Local Government. The conference will also feature best practice case studies in sustainable development, including creating sustainable work and living places, addressing the challenges of sustainability, and providing advice for how State and Local Government and business can achieve sustainable development goals in a cost-effective manner. Early Bird registrations end on 21 April. For enquiries, contact Denise McQueen on (03) 8534 5021, or email denise.mcqueen@halledit.com.au.

Workshops
Writing for Government – in Plain Language (Devonport)
A practical, one-day Writing for Government workshop will be held in Devonport on 13 April for those who produce internal documents such as minutes and briefings, and those who wish to improve their skills in this area. The workshop will explore techniques for writing effectively in plain language, editing, writing for an audience, writing style and the principles of effective writing. The cost is $325. For details, visit www.ttc.tas.gov.au, or phone 6232 7255.
Collaborative Business Development Opportunities (Ulverstone)
Central Coast Council is coordinating a visit with Rodin Genoff and is investigating the opportunity for practitioners involved in the regional economic development space, across all levels of government, to have a workshop with Rodin. Rodin is an internationally-renowned business cluster/collaborative business development and investment specialist. He has also developed training programs for practitioners that are working in that space. The proposed workshop is tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of 18 April, at the Ulverstone Civic Centre. To register your interest, please email Peter Murden at Central Coast Council at peter.murden@centralcoast.tas.gov.au.

Stand Up, Speak Up and Persuade (Hobart)
Would you like to be able to stand up, speak up, and persuade an audience to take on your ideas and motivate them to take action? A workshop, to take place in Hobart on 19 April, will cover the crucial skills of communication, managing your nerves, developing your topic, structuring your presentation, voice strategies, the 10 ‘Deadly sins’ of PowerPoint misuse, and much more. The cost is $525. For details, visit www.ttc.tas.gov.au, or phone 6232 7255.

Cross Cultural Awareness (Newnham)
The University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) is offering a free, one-day workshop on Cross Cultural Awareness, at the University of Tasmania, Newnham, on 2 May. Presented by Monika Dutkiewicz of the Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania), the workshop will cover: multicultural Australia and Tasmania; older and merging culturally and linguistically diverse communities; the effect torture and trauma issues can have on settlement; culture - what is it?; effective cross-cultural communicatio; and working with interpreters. Numbers are limited. To register your attendance, please visit www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/reply/udrh-pdce.php?det_id=17.

Upcoming Events
General Meeting, Launceston 6 April
General Management Committee Meeting, Hobart 11 May
LGMA Congress, Cairns 22-25 May
National General Assembly, Canberra 19-23 June
AGM/General Meeting, Hobart 20 July
Local Government Conference, Hobart 21-22 July