President’s Message
The LGMA National Congress held in Hobart was an exceptionally well-organised, thorough and worthwhile event. The keynote speakers were all of a high quality and set the tone for a successful gathering. There were also a variety of workshops to attend and the exhibitor’s hall was very popular. Apparently it was the largest congress for some time and well over 700 guests attended the Congress Dinner. We (Tasmanian contingent) were justifiably proud of the occasion – the setting was magnificent, the entertainment was first class and the food and wine certainly reinforced Tasmania’s excellent reputation.

A number of delegates felt it was one of the best congresses they had attended and commented favourably on the program organised for partners. Many were going to take advantage of the post conference overnight tours and daytrips. LGAT CEO, Allan Garcia, is to be commended on his role as MC and for his initiative in collecting over $2000 for “Beyond Blue”. Beware the noisy mobile phone at our LGAT conference!

Whilst the messages from all keynote speakers were thought provoking, I was particularly impressed by Mr Jeff Kennett’s presentation. In light of issues currently presenting in Local Government, his address definitely helped contextualise the role, responsibility and vision needed by members of our sector as we approach 2050. If you pause for a moment, it is only 43 years away and highlights how quickly time flies and the need for us to look to the future.

We all acknowledge that the water and sewerage debate is currently creating turbulent times for the sector. Whilst, this situation is unsettling and may at times cause anxiety, confusion and polarised opinions, at the end of the day, we [elected members and staff] must work as best we can together, in a respectful, responsive manner and aim to secure positive outcomes and a better future for all Tasmanians. As our sphere of government is closest to the community, it is our obligation to be informed, objective and progressive. It is our role as stewards and perhaps even our legacy.

To close on a different note – on behalf of all Tasmanian councils, I would like to wish Swansea residents and the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council all the best for tomorrow’s announcement in Ballarat regarding Australia’s Tidy Town Awards – go Swansea!

Association Meets Treasurer on Water and Sewerage
Many councils have reached boiling point on the issue of water and sewerage and have expressed concerns about the future of services and infrastructure. This week LGAT President, Mike Gaffney and CEO, Allan Garcia met with the Treasurer, Michael Aird to voice dissatisfaction about the shortage of information on the current process, its timing, and the lack of involvement of Local Government in the decision making process.

Mr Aird believes the status quo is unsustainable and has firm views in relation to the reform of water and sewerage in Tasmania. He is committed to reforms that ensure that water and sewerage functions and services are provided to an appropriate and adequate level across the State. He also expressed the need for major upgrades and new infrastructure, economic development, and the importance of addressing public health and environmental concerns.

In response to the Association’s concerns that the delays and uncertainty of process was causing confusion, anger and mistrust, the Treasurer said he had already discussed the water and sewerage issue with around 20 councils and expressed his intention to continue to communicate openly with the sector, especially once the Taskforce has reviewed the analysis presently being undertaken. Mr Aird acknowledged the frustration in Local Government but reiterated that these were very complex, time-consuming issues. The President emphasised the policy position of the Association, acknowledging that while some councils were under considerable duress in relation to water and sewerage infrastructure, the majority were providing adequate services. The preference for a Local Government-owned solution was noted by the Treasurer but without commitment.

The Treasurer expressed a desire to work with Local Government and not against it, and would prefer a cooperative approach to reach an agreed outcome on the matter. He advised that while it was important to get the reforms into place as soon as possible, as much time would be taken as necessary to get the correct final result. Mr Aird reiterated the undertaking of Premier Paul Lennon to call a special meeting of the Premier’s Local Government Council after the Water and Sewerage Taskforce had done further work. He considers this to be a starting point for discussion, not a conclusion.
2007 Local Government Conference - 'The Art of Survival'
Time is running out to register your attendance at the 2007 Local Government Conference to be held at Wrest Point from May 30 - June 1. The impressive line-up of keynote speakers from around Australia promises an informative and inspirational conference experience as they explore the issues of climate change, financial sustainability, public art policy, leadership and community engagement. Antarctic adventurer, Peter Bland, will also share his remarkable story of survival. A highlight of the conference will be the Civic Mutual Plus Survivors Dinner, incorporating the announcement of the 2007 Local Government Awards for Excellence, to be held at the City Hall from 7.15pm on May 31. Guests will enjoy fine dining ‘survivor-style’ and an evening of compelling entertainment. To register, download the Conference Program and Registration Form from the LGAT website at www.lgat.tas.gov.au.

2007 Local Government Awards for Excellence
Twenty-seven nominations were received for the 2007 Local Government Awards for Excellence from councils across the State. Category finalists will be featured throughout the Local Government Conference on May 31. Winners will be announced at the Civic Mutual Plus Survivors Dinner. Congratulations to all the entrants for the excellence and leadership demonstrated through the development of a wide variety of projects that have resulted in many positive outcomes for the workplace and community.

Vale Councillor Rodney Cooper
It is with sadness that LGAT recognises the passing of Councillor Rodney Cooper. Clr Cooper represented the Ulverstone and Central Coast Councils with determination and gusto for nearly twenty years. Clr Cooper was recently recognised for his efforts and work with the presentation of an ‘Outstanding Commitment and Service to Council’ Award. The presentation took place last week at the North West Regional Hospital in Burnie. The presentation by LGAT President Mike Gaffney was made in conjunction with Mayor Mike Downie, General Manager Kathy Schaefer, MLC Sue Smith and former General Manager Alf Mott. Rodney’s family and close friends were present at the presentation and he was exceptionally appreciative of this award. Rest in peace.

Landcare Australia Awards Open for Entries
The 2007-2008 State and Territory Landcare Awards are open for entries. The Awards recognise outstanding achievements in landcare among councils, individuals, schools, primary producers and others. The Leighton Holdings Local Government Landcare Partnerships Award is presented to an outstanding Local Government organisation, collaborating with its community to manage its local environment and natural resources. Information on entering the Landcare Awards is available at www.landcareonline.com.

Tourism 21 Industry Workshops
Tourism 21 guides improvements in the performance, competitiveness and structural efficiency of the Tasmanian tourism industry and is currently under review. The Tourism Industry Council Tasmania and Tourism Tasmania invite you to contribute to the second phase of the review, following on from industry consultations held in late 2006. Hear the latest research into changes in consumer behaviour and participate in facilitated discussion on the content and direction of the next 3-year business plan. Sessions will be held in Launceston (May 21), Burnie (May 22) and Hobart (May 24). RSVP by Friday, May 18 to Fiona Rhodes, ph. 6230 8163 or email Fiona.Rhodes@tourism.tas.gov.au.

Water Project Funding
Grants of up to $50,000 are available to Local Governments and other organisations through the Community Water Grants Program. For projects that meet special criteria, applicants may be eligible to receive up to $250,000 in funding. The five-year, $200 million Community Water Grants program targets smaller-scale projects within individual communities, such as initiatives to save water, enhance water recycling and improve the health of surface and groundwater resources. Grant applications must be submitted by July 4. For more information, visit www.communitywatergrants.gov.au/grants/round3/index.html.

Chance to Catch a Fishwise Grant
Fishwise Community Grant funding is available for projects that improve the management of recreational sea fisheries and community understanding of fishing issues. Individuals and organisations with suggestions on ways to improve recreational fishing in their community are invited to submit an expression of interest for a Fishwise Community Grant by 8 June. Successful applicants will be invited to provide a full project proposal. Previously funded projects include recreational fishing infrastructure for Local Government; the Fishcare Volunteers program; educational programs on responsible fishing practice; and events such as Take a Kid Fishing days. For details, visit www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/fishwise, ph. 6233 7042 or email fishwise@dpiw.tas.gov.au.

Collaborating for Success
As a part of the National Roadshow of Forums planned for Careers Week, VETNetwork Australia is hosting an event “Collaborating for Success” in Launceston on Thursday evening, May 31 at the Tramsheirs Function Centre at Invermay in Launceston. Service providers from around the state are invited to take part in this professional learning and networking opportunity. For further details or a copy of the registration form, ph. Martin Binns at Launceston Workplace Learning on 6331099.