Clarence Receives National Award

For the second year running, Clarence City Council has received a National Award for Local Government. Council’s nation-leading coastal development strategy, based on the IA Climate Change Impacts on Clarence Coastal Areas Report, has won the Urban Planning Reforms Award. The Clarence Planning Scheme Amendment that has arisen from the Climate Change Impacts Report recognises the issues associated with climate change at the strategic level within the Planning Scheme’s Planning Policy Framework. It also introduces new controls to deal with the major threats of inundation, erosion and wave run-up associated with climate change in coastal areas. The Planning Scheme Amendment will prohibit all but sustainable growth by setting new controls to ensure that safe and properly constructed structures only can be developed. In 2009, Council won the Innovation in Natural Resource Management Award for the Cambridge Sewerage Strategy – a vital infrastructure element in the Coal River Valley Irrigation Scheme.

Local Government Health Plan Expanding from Victoria

A scheme specially designed for Local Government employees, their families and councillors is expanding from Victoria into Tasmania. Fifty-five of Victoria’s 79 councils are now members of the Local Government Employee Health Plan, launched in 2009, by the Municipal Association of Victoria, Health Link Consultants and not-for-profit health insurer GMHBA. The plan achieves premium savings of up to 45% by providing a facility called the Excess Refund Pool. Money from the pool is used to reimburse any excess payable in the event that fund members or their families are hospitalised. Members of the plan can opt for health cover that attracts the lowest premium and the highest excess, and know they will be refunded the full amount of the excess charged. Twenty of Tasmania’s 29 councils have so far expressed interest in joining the scheme and moves are also underway to roll out the scheme to water authorities in Victoria and Tasmania.

Climate Change Action Planning Package

The Local Government and Shire Associations of New South Wales have produced a resource package to help councils meet challenges associated with climate change. The Climate Change Action Planning package is designed for councils to self-assess and create strategies that are suitable to their local circumstances. Components of the package include technical advice, guides to hosting workshops to identify climate change risks in particular areas, and information on developing a basic greenhouse gas emissions inventory for councils. More than a quarter of the state’s councils have completed risk assessments which have identified more than 7,000 risks to their operations from climate change, including water shortages, warmer temperatures, a longer fire season and rising sea levels. The project has been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust. For more information, go to www.lgsa-plus.net.au/www/html/1903-climate-change-action-pack.asp.
Mayor Seeks Community Feedback via Twitter

Mayor Melva Hobson of Redland City Council is believed to be the first Mayor in south-east Queensland to launch a personal Twitter page to encourage open dialogue with residents. The Council has been interacting with residents for some time using social media and the Mayor’s Twitter page, located at www.twitter.com/MelvaEHobson, is part of the community engagement initiative. Residents have been encouraged to use Twitter to provide feedback on the recently adopted Redlands 2030 Community Plan – a long-term vision for the development of Redlands, based on the views of local residents, businesses and organisations. Cr Hobson says she wants to be in touch with people’s thoughts and suggestions. “The benefit of Twitter and other social media is that they can help councils reach out to people who might not usually engage with Local Government,” she said. “Social media widens the ways in which people can help shape the future of their regions.”

Perth Unleashes Pedal Power

The City of Perth has called for public involvement in drafting a plan to increase the use of bicycles as a form of sustainable transport in the city. The Council’s Cycle Plan will help the city meet its 2029 vision to create a “progressive city streetscape with improved access and routes for cyclists”. Development of the plan will benefit the thousands of cyclists in the city and encourage others to take up a sustainable mode of transport. It is envisaged a draft document on cycling in Perth will comprise objectives and targets for cycling including: increased end-of-trip facilities; development of a strategic cycle network; high quality education and training; best practice land use planning principles; improved infrastructure and safety; and identified opportunities for integrated transport programs and projects. Further information can be found at www.perth.wa.gov.au/cycleplan.

Funding Approved for Stormwater Initiative

Stormwater management in Adelaide’s eastern suburbs has received a boost with the Federal Government confirming $10 million in funding under the national Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse program. The funding will help finance the establishment of a stormwater harvesting project being undertaken by five councils. Burnside, Norwood Payneham and St Peters, Campbeltown, Tea Tree Gully and Walkerville Councils are putting up a combined investment of $16 million for the project which will connect a number of storm water harvesting sites to enable water movement between the sites, as required. Harvested and repatriated stormwater will be used to irrigate council managed parks, sporting ovals and gardens.