Many councils have already initiated meetings and workshops regarding the 2007-2008 budget. Capital works, operational needs, community strategies and identifying priorities are just some aspects of the process, which need to be considered and discussed. All councils seek ways to effectively manage and co-ordinate limited resources and it is apparent that the Tasmania Local Government sector is willing, and has the capacity, to disperse information between councils and across regions.

All Local Government Associations in Australia possess both strengths and weaknesses. One of advantages in Tasmania’s LG sector is the ability for council representatives (elected and staff) to meet on a regular or semi-regular basis. There are numerous opportunities for networking, interaction and sharing of good ideas. Newsletters, magazines, websites, workshops, weekend forums, professional modules, meetings and conferences are all valuable opportunities for the cross-fertilization and investigation of ideas and initiatives.

As President, I have been fortunate to attend and present at a number of council workshops and meetings across the state. It is beneficial to listen to individuals who have a different understanding and opinion regarding the challenges faced at local, regional, state and national level. It is also gratifying to be involved with people who are committed and responsive to the myriad of issues that arise in each of the municipalities. Local Government is a sphere of Government that has the ability to interact and respond to each and every person in the state.

“Water and Sewerage” is one challenge that affects all 29 councils and at the March LGAT General Meeting, four recommendations were endorsed and supported by member councils. Local Government’s concern over the issue of W & S should not be underestimated nor should it be ignored. Local Government in Tasmania has a positive relationship with both State and Federal Governments and it is imperative that for the benefit of our communities that respectful rapport continues.

Local Government Awards for Excellence Entries Due Now

Councils are encouraged to submit a nomination for the 2007 Local Government Awards for Excellence, for large and small projects that benefit the community and promote a better future for Tasmania. Entries close 16 April. To download an entry form and for more information, go to http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=208 or contact Stephanie Watson on 6233 5119. The awards are proudly sponsored by Civic Mutual Plus.

Tasmanian Councils and Workchoices Legislation

There has been quite a bit of media coverage in recent days about the potential impact of the Federal Workchoices legislation on Council workers around Australia, including some mis-reporting of the situation in Tasmania!

Many Councils in Tasmania already have industrial agreements in place; some operate under federal Awards; and others use a combination of agreements and awards. These are all made under the Federal Industrial Relations system.

With the introduction of Workchoices there will be changes and currently Councils are assessing the impact of these on their own operations. Introductory information sessions were held around the state last year and more recently a workshop was held to look at some of the more practical implementation issues. LGAT will continue to support these processes.

Probably the most significant issue for some Tasmanian Councils is whether they are trading corporations. If they are not, Workchoices will not apply and eventually they will come into the State IR system. To this end, we are watching test cases elsewhere with interest.

In short, it is not expected that there will be the dramatic change in Tasmania. Many of those who work in Tasmanian Councils are used to the process of agreement-making and to date there have been positive outcomes for all parties. This is a cyclical process and a number of Councils are currently negotiating new workplace agreements with the unions. There is no reason to think this process will change, so whilst there may be some matters needing clarification, it should not be threatening to any party.
LG Workshops – Air Regulations 2007
The Environment Division is conducting a series of workshops for Local Government officers regarding the proposed regulations on domestic solid fuel burning appliances and backyard burning. The purpose of the workshops is to inform Local Government officers of the new provisions and to provide information to assist in the implementation of the proposed regulations. The workshops are specifically aimed at Environmental Health Officers. Workshops will be held in:

HOBART: Tuesday 17 April 2007, 9-3.30, 6th Floor Conference Room, 143 Macquarie Street
LAUNCESTON: Wednesday 18 April 2007, 9-3.30, Inveresk Tram Sheds, Inveresk, Launceston
BURNIE: Thursday 19 April 2007, 9-3.30, Burnie Civic Centre, Wilmot Street, Burnie

2007 National Awards for Local Government
The theme for the 2007 National Awards for Local Government is ‘Local Government - working hard for Australians’. The aim this year is to showcase and reward the unrecognised hard work that is going on in councils around Australia. Submissions for the 2007 Awards close on Friday 11 May. Councils can enter a completed or on-going project in any of 15 Award categories. For further information call 1 800 065 113 or email awards@dotars.gov.au.

Sustainable Land Use Tool
The Multi-Criteria Analysis Shell for Spatial Decision Support (MCAS-S) allows decision makers to analyse and compare mapped information, without the need for specialised training or technical support. MCAS-S was developed by the Bureau of Rural Sciences as part of the Australian Collaborative Land Use Mapping Program. It is expected to be used by research agencies, land managers and decision makers to help plan sustainable land use and natural resource management. Further information is available online at http://adl.brs.gov.au/mcass/.

Community Infrastructure Ideas Register
ALGA has set up a database for councils and other interested parties to register examples of the types of community infrastructure that could be funded under a proposed Local Community Infrastructure Renewals Fund (LCIRF). The ideas register has been developed for councils to assist ALGA in putting the case for support for such a program. To submit an idea on the register go to www.alga.asn.au/communityInfrastructure.

Climate Change
The Urban Research Program (URP) at Griffith University has released a new report looking at Local Government and Climate Change. Climate Change: What are Local Governments Liable For? by Phillipa England examines Local Government’s responsibilities in dealing with climate change considerations when exercising their functions and powers. To view this report refer to http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/urp/.

Graffiti Management Website
The New South Wales Government has commenced operating a website that will provide councils and other organisations with detailed advice on how to remove and prevent graffiti vandalism. The website, located at http://www.graffiti.nsw.gov.au, provides practical advice and information for local government and communities about how to tackle graffiti on both public and private property.

National Walk Safely To School Day 2007 (WSTSD) will be held on Friday 4 May. This is the eighth year of WSTSD which is part of a national network of activities to encourage parents and carers to walk to school with primary school children to develop healthy lifestyle habits at a young age as well as educate children on safe pedestrian behaviour. For further information refer to www.walk.com.au.

Culture and Recreation statistics

Community Safety and Security Conference
Innovative strategies to improve safety and security within communities will be the focus of a national conference for Local Government safety and community managers to be held in Sydney on 17-18 May. The conference will focus on innovative strategies being pursued by councils across Australia to improve safety and security in communities. More information about the conference is available on www.halledit.com.au.

Towards Healthy Environments – Public Health Planning Forum
The Municipal Public Health Planning Good Practice Program State Forum will be held in Melbourne on Monday 23 April 2007. To register visit http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/forum_enviro.htm by Wednesday 18 April 2007. For further information contact Necia Burford by phone on (03) 9096 0413 or by e-mail at necia.burford@dhs.vic.gov.au.

Recount to fill Alderman Vacancy – Burnie City Council
Following the death of Alderman Jan Blizzard, Robert Bentley has been declared elected to fill the vacant office of councillor to serve until the next general election of council.