



Figure 1 Trousers Point Beach, Flinders Island, with Mount Strzelecki in the background

RESOURCE SHARING IN ACTION – WEST TAMAR AND FLINDERS COUNCILS

While Tasmania is a somewhat isolated regional economy with challenges – spare a thought for our Island’s islands, and their communities.

To get to Flinders Island requires a 200km plus trip from the Tasmanian mainland, via sea or air – landing at the council run airport. Flinders Island is a very beautiful place, as Fig 1 from photographer Stu King, and Fig 2 from photographer Jana Harper make clear. It is not surprising then that Flinders Island is attracting some larger scale development and tourism projects.

Flinders has about 900 residents and just 28 full time equivalent council staff. It has been estimated that a council needs around 100 different job skills to fulfill the average range of functions most communities expect. Small councils can find it almost impossible to hire staff to cover all the skills they may need in a year.

Like many, Flinders Council had been outsourcing specialist jobs like town planning, building and plumbing inspection to businesses and other councils for several years.

However, sourcing development approval services from multiple providers became difficult and inefficient to manage.

Negotiations led to West Tamar Council offering to assist Flinders Council with planning, building and plumbing services for a 12 months trial. Applications for development on Flinders were simply sent to West Tamar staff to provide town planning reports and recommendations for Councillors to discuss in the chambers at Flinders. Council appointed West Tamar as their Permit Authority, meaning that once a decision was made by Flinders Councillors, West Tamar Council would issue all required permits. The resource sharing trial was a success,

improving the financial position of both councils and communities. Staff in West Tamar Council’s Development Services Department have been rather busy – with resource sharing arrangements now place to assist George Town and Dorset councils as well.

The resource sharing arrangement between Flinders and West Tamar is a good example of how councils all around Tasmania are stretching their resources further, keeping up with growing and changing legal requirements for development; while still ensuring locally elected community representatives make good decisions on proposed developments.



Figure 2 View of Darling Range, Mt Strzelecki and Cape Barren Island in the distance

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Through LGAT Membership, Tasmanian councils are able to raise issues at the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) National General



Assembly of Local Government. Further, LGAT as a member of ALGA has two Directors on the ALGA Board - providing a bridge between local issues and Federal policy and politics.

ALGA is small but highly focussed on the job of maintaining and strengthening the relationship Local Government has with the Australian Government. It is a critical relationship because Local Government receives up to 10% of its annual funding from the Commonwealth. It is also vital that there is a Local Government perspective on federal initiatives.

Importantly, the ALGA President participates at COAG and ministerial council meetings, along with State Premier's and Ministers. Local Government gets a strong voice at these key decision-making forums.

Like LGAT, ALGA is a small, lean organisation which relies strongly on the input of its Members, the State Associations. In turn, it delivers benefits to the whole Local Government sector.

Through the collaborative efforts of all the Associations under the strong ALGA umbrella, a highly successful campaign to restore FAGs indexation bore fruit in the last Federal Budget. The loss of indexation cost Tasmanian Local Government around \$20 million over a three-year period.

Mayor Doug Chipman
LGAT President



DRIVING EFFICIENCIES THROUGH LGAT

Many councils across Tasmania are benefiting from the use of aggregated procurement (tender exempt) contracts set up by LGAT as a member of the National Procurement Network.

Some councils that have purchased high cost plant and machinery and trucks through the contracts in the last 12 months include - Central Coast, Devonport, Clarence, Derwent Valley, Hobart, West Coast, Southern Midlands, Kingborough, Huon Valley, and Meander Valley.

Use of the available contracts provides significant benefits to councils and suppliers, when compared to the traditional approach of advertising and responding to tenders.

Both time and money are being saved through significant discounts on the purchase price of goods and services as well as on the actual purchase process.

Purchase process

By way of example - if a council is looking to purchase a grader to the value of \$310,000, they can purchase it via the LGAT/National Procurement Network contract, or go to public tender. Associated costs are outlined below:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TENDER

Estimated cost to Local Government to prepare and conduct the tender process: \$10,000 - \$20,000*

Estimated cost to Supplier to respond to the tender: \$10,000 - \$20,000*

LGAT/NPN CONTRACT

Estimated cost to Local Government

- normally negligible - purchases may be made through a simple Request for Quotation process rather than a full Tender (also associated compliance and legal risks are reduced)

Estimated cost to the supplier

- normally negligible - when the council purchases the grader through the LGAT/NPN supply panel, the supplier pays a small rebate to the lead agent for the contract (a nominated local government association). The rebate is around 1% of the sales price of the goods and is used to directly fund procurement functions put in place to benefit councils.

Price of the goods purchased

Under the LGAT/NPN contracts, significant discounts have been negotiated with suppliers as part of the initial tender process to set up supply panels. These discounts are then available as a minimum rate and can be further negotiated by councils. Initial discounts on plant, machinery and trucks are in the order of between 5% and 15% off the regular supplier price.

For our grader example, between \$32,000 and \$52,000 of savings can be made through purchasing the grader through the LGAT/NPN supply arrangement rather than a separate council run tender. If considered across the whole sector, the potential efficiency savings each year are huge. Now that is a message we feel worth 'driving' home.

**Research undertaken by the Western Australian Local Government Association.*



WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A SHARED RESOURCE?

From the late 1980s and early 1990s, councils lacking skills and resources in one area would partner with those with a matching capacity.

By 2015, many southern Tasmanian councils had joined a resource sharing partnership known as the Joint Venture. Sharing resources is a very efficient means for employers to overcome the challenges of having a smaller budget or being remote – it plugs the gaps. Sharing resources is an effective alternative to amalgamation which can be a case of ‘throwing the baby out with the bath water’. While amalgamations might deliver a council that has adequate resources through increased geographical size, they don’t automatically improve a council’s financial position.

Resource sharing can both save and earn money for councils – but what is it like for council staff to work as a *shared resource*? We talk to Town Planner, Shane Wells (pictured above) about his experience working in the Joint Venture.

Shane you went to work as a Town Planner at Brighton Council first – a council that pioneered resource sharing, what was it like for you and your career?

“Well, by working at Brighton as a Town Planner I was actually working on development applications for other councils like Tasman and Glamorgan Spring Bay, and then on the Interim Planning Schemes for councils in the Joint Venture”.

Is it stressful tossed in the deep end like that? *“Not at all, being in a pool of planners meant I could always draw on colleague’s knowledge and the councils have comfort that more senior and experienced staff could be called for help, so it was a really good way for any planner to learn advanced skills on the job in a low risk way”.*

Do you think staff just end up working harder for the same pay in resources sharing? *“Ha, no, I couldn’t say that. Staff are paid an extra amount to work in the Joint Venture, so just like the council I was rewarded there”.*

But all those councils must have kept you very busy? *“Yes, sometimes working across a number of organizations it is difficult to prioritize tasks, but usually the work could be scheduled effectively for everyone. For me though, the benefits outweighed the costs”.*

How so? *“Well, by working for a number of councils, I was gaining broad experience in a great variety of development applications in a short time: new tenements in Brighton or the industrial estate, agribusiness in the Derwent Valley, or tourism and hospitality in Sorell and on the east coast. And then all the planning scheme related work – the diversity helped build and maintain experience and knowledge of the region in which I work and I can use this knowledge in my career”.*

Shane now works as Manager Planning & Special Projects for Glamorgan Spring Bay Council with a day a week at Tasman just to keep things interesting!

NT (\$5M)	\$22
WA (\$58M)	\$22
QLD (\$98M)	\$20
TAS (\$11M)	\$20
SA (\$29M)	\$17
NSW (\$109M)	\$14
VIC (\$63M)	\$10

Figure 1 Tourism spend by councils, by state, by head of population (total spend in brackets)

HOW IMPORTANT ARE COUNCILS TO TOURISM?

Councils are ideally placed to contribute meaningfully to the growth and promotion of their region, through tourism.

Until recently, it was not known just how much of the heavy lifting councils were doing. The release of the ‘Local Government Spend on Tourism’ report, by the Australian Regional Tourism Network, has provided some interesting information. By working with Local Government, the report authors (DMB Consulting) achieved a high response rate, making their 2015/16 results highly representative and worthy of attention.

In the 2015-16 year, the report found councils spent an estimated \$373M on: operating visitor information centres, running festivals and events, and developing and promoting tourism.

Tasmanian council’s total spend on tourism, is among the lowest. However on a per head basis, Tasmanian councils are spending toward the upper level (Figure 1). Also of note is that 66% of the total spend nationally, is made by regional and remote councils.

About 90% of Australian councils agreed that their area has economic development potential through tourism, and 80% of councils employ staff in a tourism role. Employment in tourism accounts for about 48% of a council’s total spend on tourism, and 35% of the national total spend was spent specifically on operating visitor information centres, including the wage costs there.

The report was prepared in a thorough way with important input from Local Government in the design, and consequently the information is relevant and useful. The report contains some information on how tourism is structured in councils, and how strategic planning occurs. A copy of the report can be viewed on the Australian Regional Tourism Network website at www.artn.com.au



ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE DELIVERS PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Everyone knows that the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) services remote and rural areas but did you know that the Tasmanian RFDS is working with existing services and community partners to improve the chances of Tasmanians having a healthy life through early detection services and health information.

In Tasmania, the RFDS supplies the state's fixed wing air ambulance working with Ambulance Tasmania to deliver essential health care services. It also reaches out to communities to deliver a broad range of primary health care services and community projects to benefit all Tasmanians.

A practical example is working with the local council in the building of patient transfer shelters at the airports at King and Flinders Island, St Helens and Wynyard.

A variety of primary care services are being delivered in Georgetown, Dorset, Break O'Day; Glamorgan-Spring Bay and Flinders council areas supporting people living with cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, mental illness and dementia.

RFDS Tasmania provides services to improve health outcomes for people living in rural and remote Tasmania:

- Non-emergency patient transfer service which is a "bed to bed" non-emergency patient transfer service.
- Look! Up in the Sky education program introduces students in year 3 to 6 to RFDS.
- RFDS provides a Mobile Dental outreach program giving education, preventative and dental services for all children under the age of 18 and eligible adults in remote areas of Tasmania
- Right as Rain health promotion, prevention and early detection program.
- 6 Scholarships to provide for medical, dental and nursing students with the opportunity to work alongside RFDS staff in Tasmania and in the Australian Outback.

An example of a current service in Swansea

Swansea Primary School is taking advantage of the first RFDS Tasmania Dental Trial. Swansea Primary School Principal, Mrs Jennie Amos was keen to be part of RFDS trial introducing dental visits to primary school children. Youngsters with healthy teeth chew food easily, learn to speak clearly and smile with confidence.

Children attended for a screening visit, two and three at a time and were returned to their classes with a 'goodie bag' containing toothbrush, toothpaste, puzzles and oral hygiene information. Each appointment took between 5 and 10 minutes, and each child was sent home with a note advising parents what treatment had been carried out, and whether their child required follow up treatment. Early check-ups allow dental problems to be found before they can lead to pain, trouble concentrating and other medical issues.



LEADERSHIP ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On 7 August, I was pleased to be able to launch the *Glenorchy City Council Community Engagement Framework*.

The *Local Government Act 1993* clearly establishes the importance of community engagement. Councils must *consult, involve and be accountable to the community*.

Further, there is genuine widespread commitment to community engagement by councils. However, there are no rules on how to engage and the diversity of communities means that councils inevitably undertake the task in different ways, at different times and with different groups of people.

Community engagement requires more than a willingness of councils to actively listen and consider the views of a range of people within their community. It requires members of the community to actively take up the opportunities provided and give feedback, opinion, and ideas.

It also requires community members to understand that ultimately, councillors acting as the Council must make decisions. These decisions, while informed by community input, must also consider matters such as affordability, resourcing and relative priorities. Council decisions will not always please everyone. A commitment to consultation does not mean that every wish of every stakeholder is heeded.

Engagement between councils and communities is not always easy. However, if there is a constructive two-way dialogue, both councils and communities are better informed, have greater ownership of problems and solutions, there are better quality decisions and a greater ability to prioritise and meet community expectations.

Dr Katrena Stephenson
LGAT CEO



Pieman River in the extreme south west of the Circular Head municipality



THE VALUE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

In June 2016, Launceston faced its largest flood threat in decades.

In response, Launceston City Council launched a digital communications strategy, to provide the local community and beyond with up-to-the-minute information. The major social media platform used was Facebook which provided the community with engaging real-time information throughout the crisis.

Key to the success of the strategy was the willingness of council staff to step in front of the cameras to explain everything from the erection of flood gates to the widespread clean-up efforts. Council used props, including red balloons and hundreds and thousands, to illustrate how and why the flood was occurring; providing easily understood educational videos throughout the crisis.

The community response to this constant provision of timely, accurate and explanatory information was incredible – with the combined weekly posts reaching 10.2 million, with a daily reach of 2.5 million people

Conventional media did not have the same access to the constant and changing stream of information as the council. Therefore, by utilising the internal information and the Council's two-year-old Facebook page, the Launceston City Council quickly established itself as the preferred information source for the local community, local, national and international media, government agencies and former residents/relatives and friends of Launceston residents.

The social media posts were also valuable in educating the viewer about the council's role during an emergency.

STRATEGIC TOURISM CIRCULAR HEAD

Circular Head is a beautiful part of Tasmania and has the potential to be a must-see destination for visitors to our State.

From the patchwork of crops on red and chocolate soils, to the charm of the Nut and the village of Stanley, Aboriginal and colonial heritage, the rugged beauty of Rocky Cape National Park with its grasses and wildflowers, and some of the state's most beautiful beaches – the region seems ripe for tourism development.

So much so, that the Cradle Coast Authority and partners have prepared a Destination Action Plan (DAP) for the region, produced with the help of the Circular Head Council, local businesses and community groups. The aim of the Circular Head Plan is to help boost the region's share, of the 1.26 million tourists that visit Tasmania each year. One million of those tourists only visit the south of Tasmania, and while growth in the north and east is strong, the north west is not faring as well.

Premier Will Hodgman said the DAPs, of which there are a number, are about "growing regional tourism so that communities right across Tasmania share in the benefits of the visitor economy, particularly through creating new jobs". Circular Head Mayor Daryl Quilliam welcomed the DAP, "in general it's a great plan and it's all linked into the Murchison Plan as well".

The Murchison Plan is a broader regional strategic plan created by Circular Head, King Island, Waratah-Wynyard and West Coast councils. It incorporates and links

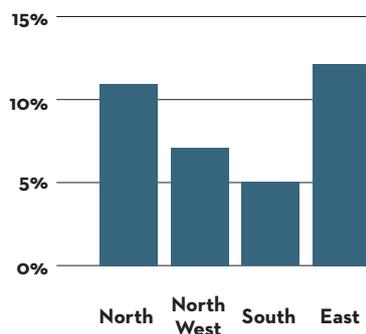


Figure 1 Growth in Tasmanian visitor numbers 2016 by region

the role of centres like Burnie, to the many satellite towns and places with tourism and business potential, like the beautiful hamlet of Corinna on the west coast's Pieman River.

The Circular Head DAP outlines a broad plan to:

- Commission an independent audit of existing visitor infrastructure, products and services;
- Consider development opportunities based on gaps uncovered by the audit;
- Research operators to identify their skills and skills gaps; and
- Promote the value of tourism in the region.

With the recent dramatic turnaround in the fortune of towns like Derby and Weldborough through council economic development initiatives, and clever appropriate development of natural assets, it will be interesting to see how the tourism boom being experienced in the south can be developed and extended to other Tasmanian regions.



Figure 1 Building heights in the city of Hobart have been the subject of much interest of late (Photography by Pete Harmsen)

HOW HIGH HOBART?

When Singaporean developers Fragrance Group made proposals to build skyscrapers on Davey and Collins streets this year, they ignited public interest and debate - on just how high Hobart should be.

The art of strategic planning requires councils to arm themselves with the best information and advice, using this to strike a balance between development and liveability.

The City of Hobart were ahead of the game in thinking about this issue, engaging architect Leigh Woolley over 12 months ago (in June 2016), to provide advice on how to best to manage future CBD building heights and associated impacts.

In addition to advice about developing new proscriptive rules for simple maximum heights, the

report contained a number of useful recommendations for the often tricky performance based rules. Performance based rules use words to describe desirable outcomes, that the council wants to achieve, but not always specifying a quantifiable limit. Often it is these descriptions that town planners must rely on, to guide their advice as to the options Councillors have, when making a decision on a tricky development proposal.

The performance rules already had in place an 'amenity building envelope' which:

- Allow a little more height on the northern sides of the building envelope than on the southern sides in some situations
- Minimise shading effects in key locations by creating solar penetration priority streets and areas.

Mr Woolley's report presented many useful and often new or newly developed concepts, advice and tools, including recommendations to:

- Contour building heights in sympathy with the 'natural amphitheatre' of the landscape and city
- Preserve key 'view lines' from locations to landscape features
- Providing that buildings not be individually prominent and become slimmer as they get taller.

Given the public interest in building heights, the City of Hobart recently held public information sessions, and called for submissions by all interested persons. 178 submissions were received.

To implement key aspects of Mr Woolley's advice, Council are undertaking the process of amending their planning scheme. In particular there will be new performance criteria and other tools for town planners to work with, and information to help guide developers.

The Council has also called for a further report to address the preparation of design guidelines, identification of additional important view lines, height control planes and specification of maximum height limits.

For more information on City of Hobart's building height work, visit www.hobartcity.com.au/Development/Planning/Planning-schemes/Planning-scheme-amendments

WHAT'S ON IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

27-28 September

31 October

1 November

1 November

TBC November

General Managers' Workshop, Hobart

Mayors' Professional Development Day, Hobart

LGAT Regional Breakfast, Hobart

General Meeting, Hobart

LGAT Regional Breakfast, Ulverstone & Launceston