This Week @ LGANT Newsletter

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

04 JULY 08

4 JULY 2008

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY FORUM

The Federal Government has announced the $512 million Housing Affordability Fund which will be distributed by direct grants, primarily to local governments, local government associations and State or Territory Governments, through a competitive selection process. Up to $30 million from the HAF is being used to develop IT infrastructure and software to roll out nationally, electronic development assessment systems and online tracking services to reduce red tape and streamline planning approvals. Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek has launched a Housing Affordability Fund (HAF) Consultation Paper. Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) will make a submission but councils are also encouraged to have their say. The draft can be found here – www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/housing/haf.htm.

A consultation forum hosted by FaCHSIA will be held in Darwin on the 17th of July. LGANT representatives have been invited and will be attending. Contact LGANT for more information or if you wish to make a submission on the draft.

HEALTHY SPACES AND PLACES PROJECT

The Healthy Spaces and Places project is a unique collaboration between the Australian Local Government Association, the national Heart Foundation, and the Planning Institute of Australia. The project had a national approach to raising awareness of the relationship between health and the built environment, and to contribute to the development of a national policy. They are proposing to hold a workshop in Darwin during the week beginning September 8th, 2008. Visit www.planning.org.au for a copy of the discussion paper.

HEALTHYSPACES&PLACES

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CRITISIZED OVER LOSS OF NRM OFFICERS

The Shadow Minister for the Environment, Dr Sharman Stone, has hit out at the Federal Government over the loss of funding for the Local Government Natural Resource Management Facilitator Network, saying that new grants scheme 'had been cobbled together with little regard for proper communication, timeframes or eligibility criteria.'

The Government announced the five-year Caring for our Country program, which replaced the Natural Heritage Trust program which concluded on 30 June. Local government can apply for funding under the new program but so can a large number of other groups.

ALGA President Cr Paul Bell said that in this highly competitive setting, local government has been disadvantaged by the cessation of funding for the Network. Under the Network, one position was funded in each State and Territory Association and ALGA and its proposed replacement is a single Australian Government position to deal with all 565 local councils and shires across Australia.

"The extremely competitive environment surrounding the Caring for our Country program, coupled with the loss of the Facilitator Network, could result in a severe long-term disadvantage to local government engagement in natural resource management," he said. Cr Bell said he was also concerned at the lack of coordinated information from the Government on the overall implementation arrangements for Caring for our Country which was making it extremely difficult for councils, regional bodies and others to plan and develop effective funding applications and meet the deadline of 1 August 2008.

ADMENDMENTS PAVE THE WAY FOR NEW NT LEASE AGREEMENTS

The Australian Government passed legislation that allows more flexibility for leasing in NT Aboriginal Communities to drive improvements to housing and infrastructure. New land lease agreements for Groote Eylandt and 13 parks and reserves will now go ahead. This agreement includes a township lease over the Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra communities for a 40-year initial term. There is option to extend to a maximum of 99 years. These changes will allow traditional owners to propose leases tailored to the needs of communities. The national parks will be co-managed as parks by the NT Government and the traditional Aboriginal owners. This is similar to Commonwealth arrangements with the owners of Uluru Kata-Tjuta and Kakadu.

LOCAL SUPER REPRESENTATIVE NOW IN DARWIN

Tony McGovern is now working full-time for Local Super. He is based in the LGANT office. He can be contacted on 8941 0082 or preferably via email **tmcgovern@localsuper.com.au**. Tony will be covering the entire Northern Territory. Please contact Tony should you have any queries regarding your superannuation.

COMING EVENTS

- Local Government Environment Conference – Cairns, 9 - 11 July 2008.
- 2nd Annual Climate Change Summit Sydney, 23 - 24 July 2008
- National State and Expert Forum – Constitutional Recognition – Canberra, August 2008
- Coast to Coast Conference – Darwin, 18 - 22 August 2008
- Healthy Places & Spaces Forum – Darwin, September 2008
- Territory Tidy Towns Awards – Darwin, 6 & 7 November 2008
- Local Government Constitutional Summit – Melbourne, 9-11 December 2008

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This newsletter is emailed direct to elected members and councils in the NT. For further information on any of the items in this newsletter, please contact the Officer concerned or LGANT on (08) 8936 2888.

If you would like to contribute an article to the “This Week at LGANT” newsletter, or need to get some information out to our members, please email Jim Fraser on jim.fraser@lgant.nt.gov.au