



Item 5: Local Government Cultural Awards – Start creating your entries!

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The deadline to join this tender has been extended. The number of councils who have joined this project has grown to 21 (8 Metro and 13 Regional).

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Emergency Management NSW (EMNSW) invites councils and other agencies to start preparing their applications for grants under the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme (NDRGS). The NDRGS replaces the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program.

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Developed and hosted by Local Government, the conference will consider climate challenges and opportunities in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and adjustment from across Australia and internationally.

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With a focus on the complex issues currently facing coastal LGAs including sea level rise, the legal implications of climate change and ageing populations, the National Sea Change Taskforce invites you to attend this conference in Byron Bay.

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The Japan Local Government Centre (CLAIR Sydney) is offering an opportunity to train in Japan under the Local Government Officials Training Program (LGOTP) 2010.

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This program provides councillors with a program with accredited learning opportunities covering a range of topics.

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Good Governance, Effective Meeting Skills and *Planning Legislation* are three key councillor workshops to be scheduled in February in Sydney.

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The GIPA Act will repeal the Freedom of Information Act 1989 (FoI Act) including the exemption categories contained within the FoI Act against disclosure of the documents to the public. Workshops on the new Act will be delivered in Sydney and in Wagga Wagga in February 2010.

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Learning Solutions is offering in house courses to improve employee writing skills. Councils can gain significant savings by having training workshops customised to their needs and supplied in house.

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Developed to assist women in non-management positions to develop skills and knowledge to empower them to reach greater career goals, the Springboard program is delivered via four workshops over four months.

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General Interest

Item 4: Survey of collaborative arrangements

Councils are encouraged to respond to the most recent Division of Local Government survey on collaborative arrangements between councils by Friday 5 February 2010.

Since 2005 the DLG has collected information about the range of collaborative arrangements between NSW councils.

The information was summarised in *Collaboration and Partnerships between Councils – A guidance paper* released by the Minister for Local Government at the 2007 Strategic Alliance Network Conference.

As previously flagged by the Minister for Local Government, the Division, in partnership with the Strategic Alliance Network Executive Committee, now seeks to update its database of collaborative arrangements in NSW. The Division is also seeking to obtain the views of councils regarding various aspects of collaborative arrangements.

File Reference: R06/0064

Survey closes

5 February 2010

Guidance Paper

www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

For further information

Wayne Trudgen, Principal Policy Officer: 02 4428 4213,

wayne.trudgen@dlg.nsw.gov.au.

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Community

Item 5: Local Government Cultural Awards – Start creating your entries!

Earn your council valuable recognition amongst the broader arts industry and community by entering the Local Government Cultural Awards. You can now get your entry underway.

Winners will be actively promoted through a range of mediums including coverage on the homepage of the Cultural Awards website as well as publications such as Local Agenda; Local Government Weekly; and the Cultural Awards 2010 Booklet.

The Awards allow councils to recognise and showcase the value of their local culture, and attract new opportunities and resources. Culture is not static - it is constantly changing, so the Awards give councils the chance to be open about new creative experiences and achievements year after year.

Don't miss out on the opportunity to submit your entry for the 2010 Cultural Awards. Strong applications are established over time, so get started now and create your entry!

File Reference: R09/0016: AM

Entries close
26 February 2010

Online information
www.CulturalAwards.lgsa.org.au

For further information
Policy Officer, Cultural
Development: 02 9242 4047,
alison.mclaren@lgsa.org.au or
christopher.hudson@lgsa.org.au

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Community

Item 6: Label Quality Problem - NSW Health Drinking Water Monitoring Program

There is a quality problem with some 2010 water sample labels. Water samplers are requested to take extra care to keep the labels dry during sample collection and transport, and to use freezer bricks rather than ice.

The Division of Analytical Laboratories (DAL) has found that the printing on some labels fades when it gets wet, causing a problem with barcode scanning.

Please follow the following advice from DAL:

- Freezer bricks should be used to keep samples cool during transport. Ice should not be used, as melted ice may contaminate the samples during transportation, or may damage the labels, making them unable to be scanned or unreadable at the laboratory. Makeshift freezer bricks, such as frozen bags of water, should not be used as they melt in transit to the laboratory and lead to the same problems as ice. Sample bottles filled with water and frozen to act as freezer bricks can create confusion at the laboratory, and you may be contacted to check if they are melted ice or unlabelled samples. Dry ice should not be used to rapidly chill microbiology samples as this may result in a decline in bacterial populations.
- DAL can return the freezer bricks it receives with samples. Contact the DAL Stores Manager to make arrangements.
- Sample containers should be packed so as to prevent damage to sample labels. If paperwork is included, it should be placed in a plastic bag (using a separate watertight plastic bag for the sample bottle may also help protect the label). During transport in a sampling officer's car, samples should be stored in a refrigerator if available. Seal the insulated container to prevent tampering during transport.

For further information

Contact the local Public Health Unit. Details available at:
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/Infectious/phus.asp>

R90/1056-12 SM

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Emergency Services

Item 7: Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme

Councils are invited to start preparing their applications for grants under the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme (NDRGS). The NDRGS replaces the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program.

Emergency Management NSW (EMNSW) coordinates the grants, which are available to councils to conduct a range of natural disaster risk assessments and risk reduction works.

A wide range of natural disaster risk assessment and risk reduction works are eligible for funding. They may include:

- natural disaster risk management studies;
- disaster mitigation strategies;
- investment in disaster resilient public infrastructure;
- structural works to protect against damage (eg disaster proofing of existing buildings at risk, levees, retarding basins and channel improvements, permanent fire breaks, other engineered works that offer protection from natural disasters);
- disaster warning systems;
- community awareness and readiness measures;
- audits of levees and warning systems;
- research to improve knowledge of natural disaster risk and mitigation;
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) based hazard and flood data for disaster mitigation purposes; and
- land and building purchase schemes in high-risk areas.

The NDRGS is yet to be officially opened for applications, however, EMNSW will announce opening and closing dates in February 2010. EMNSW invites councils to begin preparing their applications to the NDRGS in anticipation.

File Reference: R90/0753LG

Online information

<http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/content.php/831.html>

For further information

EMNSW: Mitigation and Risk Management Unit: 02 8247 5925; ndrgs@em.nsw.gov.au

LGSA: Liz Gemes, Policy Officer Rural Affairs & Emergency Services: 02 9242 4063; liz.gemes@lgsa.org.au.

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Environment

Item 8: MAV National Environment Conference: Transitioning to a climate resilient future

Developed and hosted by Local Government, the conference will consider climate challenges and opportunities in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and adjustment from across Australia and internationally.

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) will host its inaugural Environment Conference in Melbourne.

To ensure a comprehensive, exciting and relevant program, the MAV is now calling for abstracts and encourages submissions from councils Australia wide. Representatives from the Local Government sector, state and federal governments, the private sector and not for profit groups are invited to attend. Registrations are now open.

File Reference: R06/0041: AL

Conference date and location
15 – 16 April 2010, Melbourne

Abstracts due
1 Feb 2010

Registration closes
7 April 2010

Online information
www.mav.asn.au/enviro2010

Further information
Simone Stuckey: 03 9667 5582,
sstuckey@mav.asn.au.

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Environment

Item 9: Australian Coastal Councils Conference

With a focus on the complex issues currently facing coastal LGAs, including sea level rise, the legal implications of climate change and ageing populations, the National Sea Change Taskforce invites you to attend this conference in Byron Bay.

Byron Bay Shire Council has been selected to host the event because of its relevance in terms of coastal hazards, development pressures and issues associated with climate change impacts.

Delegates will have the opportunity to study these issues at first hand in a local field tour to be conducted as part of the event. Delegates will also have the opportunity to provide input into development of a coastal policy agenda for the next Federal election which will help to achieve the sustainability of the Australian coastal zone and its communities.

Date

2-3 March 2010

Early bird registration

Closes 5 February 2010.

Online information

<http://www.seachangetaskforce.org.au/Conference.html>

For further information

Alan Stokes:

info@seachangetaskforce.org.au

Climate Change and Ageing Communities

Treasurer Wayne Swan recently identified the two most daunting challenges facing Australia as climate change and the nation's ageing population. Coastal councils and communities are at the forefront of having to deal with both these issues and accordingly the conference will provide a focus on these matters. The Hon Justine Elliot MP, Minister for Ageing, will present a keynote speech on the government's policy agenda to address the needs of ageing communities.

The conference will consider the Rudd Government's response to the George Report Managing our Coastal Zone in a Changing Climate: The Time to Act is Now. Jennie George MP, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts, which conducted the parliamentary coastal inquiry, will provide an update on the recommendations of the report and current response by the Australian Government.

The conference will also feature a detailed presentation on the on the Federal Government's recently released report – Climate Change Risks to Australia's Coasts.

File Reference: R06/0041 AL

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Industrial Relations

Item 10: Councils declared not to be national system employers

On 22 December 2009 the Hon. John Robertson, NSW Minister for Industrial Relations, issued the **Industrial Relations (National System Employers) Order 2009** which declares NSW councils, county councils and specified subsidiaries of councils to not be national system employers for the purposes of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth).

Further information
LGSA Workplace Solutions:
02 9242 4142

As required by section 14(2) of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) the Hon Julia Gillard, Deputy Prime Minister and federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations also issued the *Fair Work (State Declarations – employers not to be national system employers) Endorsement 2009*, dated 17 December 2009.

The effect of the Order and Endorsement is to confirm that NSW councils and county councils, as well as the specified subsidiaries of councils, are covered by the NSW State industrial relations jurisdiction and are not national system employers for the purposes of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth).

Notwithstanding that NSW councils, county councils and the specified subsidiaries of councils are covered by the State industrial relations jurisdiction, it should be noted that there are some provisions of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) that apply to all employers.

The Associations will be providing further information to councils on the federal industrial relations laws that continue to apply to employers operating under the NSW State industrial relations jurisdiction in the very near future.

File Reference: I09/0028

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Learning

Item 11: CLAIR Local Government Traineeship in Japan

The Japan Local Government Centre (CLAIR Sydney) is offering an opportunity to train in Japan under the Local Government Officials Training Program (LGOTP) 2010.

Under the LGOTP in Japan, Local Government employees from around the world are hosted by Local Government in Japan for 10 months of training.

The LGOTP is supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, and CLAIR, but is primarily implemented by individual Local Government in Japan.

This year an invitation has been extended to young council staff members from Australia and New Zealand, who have some command of the Japanese language. Councils may directly contact CLAIR Sydney if they wish to recommend an appropriate candidate from their council.

The town of Yakage, in the Okayama prefecture, will be the host for the program this year. Program costs will be covered by the host institution which includes return airfares, living expenses, transportation expenses within Japan and training expenses.

R94/0110-02: NS

LGOTP training

23 May 2010 – 25 March 2011

Applications due

3 February 2010

Online information

<http://www.jlgc.org.au/about/foreword.html>

Further information

Ahkey Liao on 02 9241 5033 or ahkey@jlgc.org.au.

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Learning

Item 12: The Councillor Weekend

This program provides councillors with a program with accredited learning opportunities covering a range of topics.

It is recognised that many councillors face constraints in travelling long distances for one day training courses, but may be able to set aside time to do an accelerated learning program of mini skills courses over two days. This course takes place over a weekend.

The Councillor Weekend will explore the principles of Strategic Planning and Asset Management for Councillors, Meeting and Chairing Skills for Councillors, and an Open Forum to discuss important issues and trends.

Councillor Weekends in 2010 have been designed to cater for both new and experienced councillors over the Friday/Saturday period.

R95/0084: RN

Date and Location

Fri 12 Mar - Sat 13 Mar 2010,
Sydney

Cost:

\$880 inc GST for workshops, manuals, refreshments and dinner on Friday evening.

Registrations:

<http://www.lgsa.org.au/www/html/151-courses-for-councillors.asp>

Further information:

Ruth Niemczyk, Learning Solutions:

ruth.niemczyk@lgsa.org.au

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Learning

Item 13: Councillor Professional Development Program Public Workshops in Sydney

Good Governance, Effective Meeting Skills and Planning Legislation are three key councillor workshops to be scheduled in February in Sydney.

Good Governance

This workshop examines how the processes, protocols, and conduct of governance contribute to council performance.

The workshop's objectives are to:

- learn from innovative councils about their community involvement and leadership
- evaluate your own leadership practices;
- identify key challenges to your role as councillor, and learn some key problem-solving and assertiveness techniques to help you address them; and
- learn five key leadership practices and identify how these can be applied.

Effective Meeting Skills

The course is designed to assist councillors in gaining the skills and confidence required to effectively participate in council meetings.

At the conclusion of the module participants should be able to:

- develop skills and knowledge to effectively participate in council meetings;
- understand common meeting procedures and formalities;
- understand conflicts of interest that councillors may come across;
- understand motion requirements and the rules of formal debate; and
- have an increased confidence in councillors' ability to participate in council meetings.

Planning Legislation Skills and Knowledge

Participants will examine fundamental planning principles, statutory frameworks and the critical steps in the process.

File Reference: R95/0084: RN

Date and Course

Good Governance – Sat 13 Feb
Effective Meeting Skills – Mon 15 Feb -6 to 9 pm
Planning Legislation - Fri 26 Feb

Cost:

The one day modules are \$495 inc GST. The evening module is \$330 inc GST.

Registrations:

<http://www.lgsa.org.au/www/html/151-courses-for-councillors.asp>

Further information:

Ruth Niemczyk, Learning Solutions:
ruth.niemczyk@lgsa.org.au

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Item 14: The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)

The GIPA Act will repeal the Freedom of Information Act 1989 (Fol Act) including the exemption categories contained within the Fol Act against disclosure of the documents to the public. Workshops on the new Act will be delivered in Sydney and in Wagga Wagga in February 2010.

The workshop will identify the practical implications for councils and provides a guide to ensuring that councils and managers are fully aware of their legal obligations under the law.

Who Should Attend?

GIPA/Fol officers, public affairs officers, governance managers and senior staff.

Course Presenter – Monica Kelly, Associate, Maddocks

2010 Date

Location

Thursday 18 February

Local Government Learning Centre, Sydney

Thursday 25 February

Bob Osborne Skills Centre, Wagga Wagga

File Reference: I98/0012:RN

Cost

\$440 inc GST per person

Registrations

<http://www.lgsa.org.au/www/html/152-courses-for-staff.asp>

Further Information

Learning Solutions: 02 9242 4181; learning@lgsa.org.au

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Learning

Item 15: In house Training Services – Writing Skills Workshops

Learning Solutions is offering in house courses to improve employee writing skills. Councils can gain significant savings by having training workshops customised to their needs and supplied in house.

We are increasingly receiving calls from senior staff requesting assistance in improving the writing skills of employees. Here are some of the one and two day writing skills programs that could be conducted on your premises:

Report Writing

This one day course aims to provide the skills you need to write effective, clear and concise reports. In this practical and interactive course, participants will work individually but also in pairs and in groups so that they get writing and planning practice during the day.

Improving Your Business Writing

This is a practical skills program focusing on the basic principles of good business writing. By the end of this course, participants will have more of the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to write clearly, accurately and effectively using a reader-friendly structure and style; understand the different types of business letters, emails, reports, proposals, minutes and/or agendas; how to write in plain English; how to project a positive image of your organisation; and, how to write quickly and without pain and suffering.

This course is best held over two days, spread one week apart so that participants can complete tasks in the intervening period.

English Grammar and Punctuation

This one day program covers issues such as different types of sentences and when to use them; verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverb and why we need to know; common grammatical errors in writing and how to correct them; how to punctuate based on the Australian Style Manual, focusing particularly on apostrophes, commas and capital letters and, how to proofread effectively.

We also have programs to help you write and present speeches, promotional copy, minutes and powerful submissions and funding applications.

For a quote

To receive a comprehensive proposal within the next few days, just contact us with your details and the names of the courses you are enquiring about.

A timely and comprehensive quote will include the cost, content, presenter profile and suggested course dates.

File Reference: I98/0012:RN

Online information:

<http://www.lgsa.org.au/www/html/153-in-house-training-services.asp>

Further information:

Darryl Rubiolo, Learning Solutions: 02 9242 4182; learning@lgsa.org.

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Learning

Item 16: Springboard 2010 workshops – a personal development program for women

Developed to assist women in non-management positions to develop skills and knowledge to empower them to reach greater career goals, the Springboard program is delivered via four workshops over four months.

Managers may wish to consider this proven program for their staff as one strategy to support the Year of the Women in Local Government.

Registrations for 2010 are now open.

Springboard aims to empower women in non-management positions to set and achieve personal goals; establish what they want from life; focus on their priorities; acquire ideas, skills and confidence needed to reach potential and goals; position themselves to make positive decisions about work and personal options and to take action.

The course includes sessions on time management, assertiveness, dealing with change, conflict resolution, problem solving, goal setting, stress management, networking, communication and action planning.

Each workshop has a high profile woman as a guest speaker. Local Government Learning Solutions coordinates a mentoring strategy in conjunction with the program and delivers a half-day program for mentors. The participants also network with women from other councils.

Program dates

Participants attend all four workshops over four months and their mentors attend the half-day workshop:

- Tuesday 30 March, Mentors
- Wednesday 31 March, Day One
- Tuesday 27 April, Day Two
- Tuesday 11 May, Day Three
- Wednesday 9 June, Day Four

File Reference: I98/0012:RN

Location

Local Government Learning Centre, 28 Margaret St Sydney

Cost

\$990 inc GST for four participant workshops and a half-day mentor workshop.

Registrations

<http://www.lgsa.org.au/www/html/152-courses-for-staff.asp>

Further information

Learning Solutions: Ruth Niemczyk: 02 9242 4180; learning@lgsa.org.au

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Planning

Item 17: New provisions on asbestos removal under the Codes SEPP

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Asbestos) Regulations 2009 has commenced. These provisions help ensure the safe removal and disposal of asbestos for complying development under the Codes SEPP.

The changes commenced on 18 January 2010.

The amendment to the regulations requires a condition of consent to be added to a complying development certificate for building or demolition work. This condition will require the following:

- That the removal of asbestos (of an area of 10 square metres) be undertaken by a licensed person under the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2001*;
- A copy of the signed contract with such a person be obtained by the certifier; and
- The contract to indicate where the asbestos is to be lawfully disposed of.

Response to councils concerns

The Department has responded quickly to councils' concerns about this important safety issue that affects many houses that are likely to be demolished under the Code's SEPP.

Comments on the effectiveness of these changes and how we can improve the communities' knowledge on the safe removal and disposal of asbestos are welcomed.

File Reference: R09/0014

Online information

<http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=GWUBIs2W9s4=&tabid=81>

For further information

Jennifer Dennis, LGSA Planning
Policy Officer: 02 9242 4094;
Jennifer.dennis@lgsa.org.au.

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Procurement

Item 18: LGP Electricity Tender for NSW councils – Deadline extended

The deadline to join this tender has been extended to 31 January. The number of councils who have joined this project has grown to 21 (8 Metro and 13 Regional).

Local Government Procurement (LGP) was approached by a number of councils, including members of the WSROC group of councils, to undertake a tender for Electricity.

This tender will incorporate large sites, street lighting and green energy options.

All council General Managers were recently sent a letter seeking their interest and commitment to join this tender process.

Fast tracking and rebate sharing

Due to the prescribed status of LGP, the approval process can be fast tracked, enabling suppliers to provide a pricing model that is anticipated to be most competitive, when compared to other pricing models available. There will be no direct costs to councils to participate in this tender. In fact, it is LGP's intention to share any rebate we may receive through this tender process.

Councils whose existing arrangements expire at anytime over the next 12 to 18 months are invited to join and enjoy the benefits of this large project.

Thank you to all councils who have chosen to participate.

Local Government Procurement Pty Ltd (LGP) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (LGSA).

R05/0057:SS

Deadline for Tender

31 Jan 2010

Contact

Please contact Bob Lewis, Business Manager if you have not received the letter from LGP seeking commitment: 02 8270 8707; blewis@lgp.org.au.

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Roads and Transport

Item 19: Smarter planning with new map portal

A new interactive mapping portal developed by the National Transport Commission (NTC) will detail the initial routes for higher productivity, or SMART trucks, to move across the country.

"The SMART truck map portal will be located on the NTC website and will display routes in every state and territory, allowing users to zoom as far in as street level to see exactly where the SMART trucks can go," said NTC Chief Executive, Nick Dimopoulos.

The map details road network classification data obtained from state and territory road agencies, which will be continually updated as the network for SMART trucks expands.

Mr Dimopoulos said that Local Governments will have an important role in ensuring that the maps help achieve the NTC's goal of a more productive and truly national transport system.

"It is important that the maps also include local road routes to provide the 'last mile' access to truck destinations, and we encourage Local Governments to work closely with their local road agency to achieve this," said Mr Dimopoulos.

Better access for SMART trucks is important as they are not only more productive, but are safer and more environmentally friendly as there are fewer trucks on the road for the same freight task.

During an NTC review of the Performance Based Standards (PBS) program in July 2009, it was revealed that many participants found it difficult to plan routes for their SMART vehicles across the road networks, and the map portal helps to address this.

Gaining access to the network still remains dependent on approval of the vehicle design by the PBS panel and permits issued by road authorities, including Local Government.

The NTC is currently considering options for improving the access process for the PBS scheme in a Regulatory Impact Statement to be released for public consultation soon.

The portal also has the potential for overlaying details about rest stops, weighbridges, refuelling areas and other truck related information in the future.

What are Performance Based Standards?

Performance Based Standards (PBS) offers the potential for heavy vehicle operators to achieve higher productivity and safety through innovative vehicle design. These gains are typically not available under conventional 'one size fits all' prescriptive mass and dimension rules or the state-based permit system.

PBS sets minimum vehicle 'performance' standards to ensure trucks are stable on the road and can turn and stop safely, and are tagged as 'SMART' trucks.

Feedback

The NTC welcomes your comments and feedback on the new map portal. Please email pbsmaps@ntc.gov.au

Online information

www.ntc.gov.au.

Feedback

pbsmaps@ntc.gov.au

Further information

Eliza Stephens, NTC
Communications Officer:
estephens@ntc.gov.au

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Tourism

Item 20: 2010 LGSA Tourism Conference Early bird registrations close next week

There are only a few days left to take advantage of early bird registration – save \$54.50 per delegate.

The sixth annual LGSA Tourism Conference will be exploring *The Business of Tourism*: creating business opportunities, understanding what funding is available and what programs may be applicable.

The sessions will also explore and debate who should hold the responsibility for funding tourism - is tourism council business?

There have been some small program changes, so please check the conference website regularly for updates.

This conference creates a framework helping mayors, councillors, tourism staff and industry representatives strengthen their tourism strategy.

The Tourism Industry Council (TIC) and Tourism NSW are also offering the Tourism Managers Exchange early on Wednesday 10 March - a free forum for council tourism managers. In addition to the program an optional Wednesday afternoon session will explore The Business of Tourism Events. This must be booked separately at a cost of \$77.

The 2010 NSW Tourism Conference is partnered by Tourism New South Wales and supported by the Tourism Industry Council. It is sponsored by Countrylink, Cowra Guardian, LPMA's Crown Land Division, CCIA, Aurora Research, Tourism Research Australia, Kempsey Shire Council, and City Marketing. (Sponsorship is still available at this time, so please enquire if you're interested).

R09/0005: MM

Register

www.TourismConference.lgsa.org.au

Early bird registration closes

27 January

Date and location

Cowra Civic Centre
10-12 Mar 2010

Host

Cowra Shire Council

Further information

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In the News

Item 21: Local Government Media

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Metro now rail-roaded

Daily Telegraph, Saturday 16 January

http://news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,26593913-5006009,00.html?from=public_rss

THE controversial \$5 billion metro rail project in Sydney's inner-west is all but dead. Transport Minister David Campbell last night buckled under pressure from inner-city councils to announce the Government was now considering an extension of existing light rail to the inner-west and through the CBD.

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Housing approvals still falling

Sun Herald, Sunday 17 January

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/housing-approvals-still-falling-20100116-mdfk.html>

Housing industry groups blame the State Government's failure to release enough vacant land, as well as taxes and charges, for what is expected to be another year of decline in new dwelling approvals.

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Council rates

Rate grab a bit special

Daily Telegraph, Monday 18 January

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,26600182-5001021,00.html>

COUNCILS across NSW plan to bolster revenue with special levies they warned ratepayers about while they were away on holidays. Consultation for a controversial council truck depot on Bondi's iconic cliffs and a 9.5 per cent rate rise to build toilets in Sutherland opened over the Christmas period.

2GB (Sydney), Monday 18 January

Host says that several local councils around the state have taken the opportunity over the Christmas holidays to quietly jack up rates. Host says that in the case of Waverley Council, rates are expected to jump by as much as 11%. Sutherland, Byron and the Blue Mountains are also likely to 'cop big rate rises'. The NSW Govt now has legislation in place to stop local councils from raising rates by more than 3.5% a year. Host says that councils can get around that legislation by citing 'special projects' and says Waverley's special case is a council depot at Hugh Bamford Reserve. Host says the big problem is a lack of accountability.

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Flood of fury over home cover rises

Daily Telegraph, Tuesday 19 January

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/property/gio-doubles-flood-prone-home-insurance/story-e6frezt0-1225820975463>

WESTERN Sydney residents who have never seen a flood in their streets are angry over their insurance premiums doubling to cover the possibility of water damage.

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Councillor remuneration

ABC Illawarra (Wollongong), Monday 18 January

Local Governments are run in different ways all around Australia. In some cases councillors do their day job on top of being a councillor and in places like Townsville councillors are full time and paid more. Duncan Gair, Mayor, Wingecarribee Shire Council, says at the moment he believes the remuneration for councillors is too low, but it should not be up around the \$80,000 mark. He believes that there will be sacrifices in relation to the sizes of the councils that would be forced to amalgamation. Gair discusses what it was like to enter the Wingecarribee Shire Council and also his promotion to Mayor. Gair says the Mayoral position is definitely reaching a time when it needs to become full time.

ABC North Coast NSW (Lismore), Tuesday 19 January

In Queensland some local councillors earn \$100,000 plus yearly. Warren Polglase, Tweed Mayor to talk about remuneration for local councillors. Tweed councillors have asked for a 55 percent payrise. Polglase says there is a heavy workload in the Tweed Shire and that they deserve extra remuneration. Steinhauer mentions that Byron Council have raised rates, and asks whether the extra salaries would mean a rise in rates. Polglase says this is not necessarily the case. Steinhauer mentions that Polglase will be meeting with Tony Kelly, NSW Minister for Planning who is releasing a vision statement for the Tweed CBD.

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Planning

ABC Sydney, Monday 18 January

The State Govt is upholding its controversial planning laws as a saviour of the economy. Community members are angry about what they have said is unwanted development in their area. Premier Kristina Keneally today said it took only 88 days to approve an expansion of the UTS Broadway campus. Barry O'Farrell, NSW Opposition Leader, has vowed to scrap the part of the Planning Act which allows the Govt to bypass council approval.

Retirement village axed

Manly Daily, Wednesday 20 January

Link unavailable

A PROPOSED 66-unit retirement village at Beacon Hill has been rejected by the Land and Environment Court, to the delight of Warringah councillors and residents. Court commissioner Robert Hussey said the proposed retirement village was an overdevelopment of the site due to its scale, height and the extent to which it would alter the landform and because of its environmental and visual impact.

Report a whitewash: O'Dea

North Shore Times, Wednesday 20 January

Link unavailable

STATE Planning Minister Tony Kelly has "whitewashed" questions by Liberal MP for Davidson Jonathan O'Dea in relation to planning matters in Ku-ring-gai. Mr O'Dea questioned Mr Kelly about the process and findings of the so-called "independent" Treacstone Report into dwelling numbers.

Building approvals most difficult to attain in NSW

Sydney Morning Herald, Thursday 21 January

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/building-approvals-most-difficult-to-attain-in-nsw-20100120-mlt1.html>

NSW is the worst-ranked state in Australia for handling development applications, yet it is building only half the number of homes needed to handle the expanding population.

ABC Riverina (Wagga Wagga), Thursday 21 January

Caryn Kakas, Executive Director of the Residential Development Council, discusses a new report card which suggests that planning processes around the country are not brilliant. NSW in particular is dragging the chain. Planning seems to be difficult for State and local Govts to get their head around because it is so open to corruption and because State and local Govt imperatives don't always coincide, according to Kakas.

2GB (Sydney), Thursday 21 January

The NSW Planning system has been criticised as being the 'worst in the nation'. The Property Council of Australia says there is inconsistency between councils, slow assessment processes and politicised decision making.

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Housing stimulus

ABC New England North West (Tamworth), Tuesday 19 January

The Moree community is continuing to man a blockade to the proposed Housing NSW development site on Auburn Street. Problems with the way Housing NSW is spending its stimulus money are now starting to appear around the state with the community in Shoalhaven on the South Coast holding a meeting criticising the Govt for its housing developments in Bomaderry. Genia McCaffery, President, NSW Local Govt Association, discusses the pockets of resistance starting to emerge over the way Housing NSW is starting to spend its stimulus money. She says Local Govt last year promised to waive the normal planning process to ensure the money got spent and the economy didn't descend into depression, however she is worried that the agreement Tamworth Council and the LGA had with the Govt is that they weren't to be building anything under the package that didn't comply with local control. If this development isn't, there may be a problem. She says the development industry and Govt are pushing to cut communities out of the development consent process, making communities angry.

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SES Funding

ABC Central West NSW (Orange), Tuesday 19 January

Interview with Bruce Miller, President, NSW Shires Association and Cowra Shire Councillor. Miller says the funding scheme for State Emergency Services will increase the expenses for councils as the 11.7% that needs to be paid, will be on a budget they have no control over setting. There has been a drop from 13.1% but the inclusion of the SES, on top of the RFS funding, will result in an increase for the Councils. Miller believes the increases will not just be in Cowra and he will be seeing the Minister if this proves to be the case. He appreciates the work done by the SES and the RFS but we need a funding model that is fair and equal.

Keeping tabs on mines a matter of planning

Newcastle Herald, Wednesday 20 January

Link unavailable

REGARDLESS of the circumstances of the deeply regrettable road fatality near Wybong on January 7, the Department of Planning's refusal to place even a few regulatory officers in the Upper Hunter to monitor the mining consents it approves is disquieting.

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Public housing

ABC South East NSW (Bega), Tuesday 19 January

Genia McCaffery, President, Local Govt and Shires Association is concerned about claims that state govt public housing projects do not meet local govt planning guidelines. A development in Batemans Bay has resulted in community backlash, with residents arguing the housing units are not appropriate for the elderly.

ABC Illawarra (Wollongong), Tuesday 19 January

The President of the Local Govt and Shires Association says she is not surprised at the growing community anger at the State Govt public housing developments. At a meeting in Nowra yesterday, more than 40 residents voiced concerns about 3 public housing developments going ahead in Bomaderry. Genia McCaffery says the Association agreed to scrap development applications for some projects during the economic downturn so Federal stimulus money could be spent quickly. But the applications were still supposed to meet local govt guidelines.

ABC New England North West (Tamworth), Tuesday 19 January

Genia McCaffery, President of the Local Govt and Shires Association, says she's concerned about claims NSW Govt Public Housing projects don't meet local planning guidelines. The projects have been criticised by locals and local Govts, with protestors establishing a blockade in Moree yesterday. McCaffery said the LGSA agreed to support fast tracked developments during the economic downturn, but only if they met council guidelines, and the anger in the community is not surprising.

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Councillor forced to give up seat

ABC Newcastle (Newcastle), Thursday 21 January

Newcastle Greens Councillor Michael Osborne will forced to give up his Ward 1 seat after being convicted over a climate change protest. He was one of 23 activists fined in the local court for blockading coal trains at Sandgate. Lindy Hyam, General Manager, Newcastle City Council is investigating whether the conviction disqualifies Osbourne from holding civic office. Lord Mayor John Tate says a breach of the code of conduct can be brought by anyone in the general public and this could happen. Osbourne says he only got a fine so this is not a serious enough charge.

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Water down the drain

Central, Wednesday 20 January

Link unavailable

WITH only a few weeks until it opens, the Kurnell desalination plant has been labelled a waste of money and energy by its critics. Director of Institute for Sustainable Futures at University of Technology, Stuart White, said the plant was too costly and not needed.

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