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Fixing Country Roads – Councils Called to Submit Full Applications

The Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon Duncan Gay MLC, has announced selected councils across regional NSW have been invited to submit full applications as part of the NSW Government’s $37.5 million Fixing Country Roads program.
Message from the President

Like councils, Local Government NSW (LGNSW) does a lot of work behind the scenes on behalf of Local Government and communities. It’s timely for us to provide updates on current issues, bills, regulations and reforms facing the NSW Local Government sector that we have actively been working on over the past days and weeks.

Local Government Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2014

Recently, I have been busy trying to secure changes to the Local Government Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2014 on two main issues – delegation of tendering and the advertising of senior positions. In relation to tenders, LGNSW has concerns about the drafting of the Bill that would allow delegation to anyone, introducing corruption risks. While we agreed with the threshold for tenders being lifted to $250,000, this limit should be for all councils or it will create two classes of councils. We also want to ensure transparent recruitment to senior positions.

Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014

I have also been active conveying our reservations about the provision for exclusive postal voting in NSW council elections, inconsistencies between the Bill and the Fit for the Future program, and the potential for cost-shifting. This is in keeping with the results of our survey we conducted with our members on aspects the Bill. We support voters having the choice between three different methods of voting at each election – pre-poll, attendance, or postal. Exclusive postal voting is a step too far.

Rural Councils

On Fit for the Future, the LGNSW Chief Executive and staff attended two meetings held in Sydney and Dubbo by the Office of Local Government on the proposed ‘rural council model’. While there was much discussion, there remains a lack of any real clarity about the ‘rural council model’. We will be pushing for further consultation to ensure that rural councils get a say on the governance structure proposed for them.

Federation White Paper

Finally, we met with the Department of Premier & Cabinet earlier this week to discuss their approach to the Federation White Paper and the implications and opportunities for Local Government in Federation Reform.

As these Bills and the Federation White Paper progresses, more updates will be provided, along with ongoing communication on the NSW Government’s Fit for the Future reform package.

Yours sincerely,

LGNSW President
Cr Keith Rhoades AFSM
Contents page

Awards

Item 1: Award opportunities
View the latest Award opportunities for Local Government

Conferences and Events

Item 2: Upcoming conferences and events
View upcoming conference and events relevant to Local Government

Grants and Funding

Item 3: Grant and funding opportunities for Local Government
View the latest grant and funding opportunities for Local Government

Community

Item 4: Creating Liveable Communities – Prizes Available
Councils in NSW are encouraged to submit their ideas to receive prize money for projects that make their community more liveable for carers, older people and people with disability.

Item 5: Consultation on Changes to the Early Childhood Quality Framework
Councils and other interested parties can now provide feedback on the proposed options for changes to the Early Childhood Education and Care National Quality Framework and how it affects the sector, families and community.

Item 6: Accessible Toilet Map and Application
Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) is in the process of adding previously undiscovered accessible toilets to the National Public Toilet Map. Councils are encouraged to provide information about accessible toilets to add to the map.

Item 7: Disability Educational Initiatives Showcase
In the lead up to the International Day for People with a Disability, the Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) is hosting an Educational Initiatives Showcase to highlight their work. Council Policy Officers working on Disability are encouraged to attend.

Environment

Item 8: Finalists’ Forum Program Now Available
The LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards includes a Finalists’ Forum featuring presentations by a selection of 2014 finalists.

Item 9: Councils Shine at Green Globes Awards
The NSW Government’s Green Globe Awards recognise environmental excellence, leadership and innovation in NSW. Councils have shown they are at the forefront of these environmental areas, winning many Award categories and also receiving highly-commended honours.

Item 10: New Flying-fox Camp Management Policy for Comment
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Learning

**Item 11: Learning and Development Network Meeting – Monday 8 December 2014**

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**Item 12: In-house Training Services – Conflict Resolution Skills**

LGNSW Learning Solutions offers the following workshops to help staff with conflict resolution skills.

**Item 13: Staff Training Courses in November and December**

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Planning

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In the News

**Item 16: Local Government NSW Media**

View the latest media releases distributed by LGNSW
Awards

Item 1: Award opportunities

View the latest Award opportunities for Local Government

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Item 2: Upcoming conferences and events

View upcoming conference and events relevant to Local Government

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Grants and Funding

Item 3: Grant and funding opportunities for Local Government

View the latest grant and funding opportunities for Local Government

Creating Liveable Communities – Prizes Available

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Community

Item 4: Creating Liveable Communities – Prizes Available

NSW councils are encouraged to submit their ideas to receive prize money for projects that make their community more liveable for carers, older people and people with disability.

The Creating Liveable Communities Competition is funded by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and administered by LGNSW.

The competition welcomes innovative ideas from councils to design accessible and inclusive social and physical environments to specifically benefit the target groups.

A total of $600,000 in prize money is available. The judging panel will assess the merits of the applications based on the eligibility and selection criteria, and award prizes to the most innovative ideas.

Prizes are anticipated to be one-off allocations, ranging from $20,000 to $100,000 for individual councils.

Creating more liveable communities has been identified as a priority in NSW 2021 and more specifically in the NSW Ageing Strategy, the National Disability Strategy: NSW Implementation Plan and the NSW Carers Strategy.

Councils wishing to make a submission are encouraged to read *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which states eight areas important for meeting the basic liveability needs of a community, including:

- The built environment
- Transport
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Communication and information
- Civic participation
- Community support and health.

More information and submission details can be found online (see fact box).
Community

Item 5: Consultation on Changes to the Early Childhood Quality Framework

Councils and other interested parties can now provide feedback on the proposed options for changes to the Early Childhood Education and Care National Quality Framework and how it affects the sector, families and community.

A 2014 review of the National Quality Framework (NQF) is being undertaken by the Australian Government, and it is now in its second stage.

The review aims to identify what is working well, areas for improvement and any unintended consequences that resulted from implementation of the NQF.

The findings from the public consultation of the first review stage have been released. This information has informed proposed changes to the NQF. The second stage of the review involves consultation on these proposed changes.

The proposed changes will be released this month in the Consultation Regulation Impact Statement.

NSW consultation sessions will be held in Sydney and regional locations. Representatives from the Australian and State Government will be present, as well as speakers from the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Dates
Wednesday 12 – Friday 21 November 2014

Online information

Contact
2014NQFReviewConsultationRIS@nhsa.org.au
Ref: R91/0075 ER
Community

Item 6: Accessible Toilet Map and Application

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) is in the process of adding previously undiscovered accessible toilets to the National Public Toilet Map. Councils are encouraged to provide information about accessible toilets to add to the map.

The National Public Toilet Map (NPTM) provides the location of more than 16,000 publicly available toilets across Australia. It also shows the operating hours, if there are shower facilities, baby change tables and the location of accessible toilets. It's very useful for people with a disability; however there are many accessible toilets still not on this map.

SCIA are extending the information provided, such as whether the toilet has a left or right hand transfer, or the type of door opening. Where possible it will also include photos of the approach to the toilets. They hope to offer as much information as possible so people can see whether the toilet is suitable for their requirements. They are also providing information and encouragement to toilet owners on best practice for accessible toilets. Unfortunately, they have found that select owners sometimes use the accessible toilets as a storage space, or the pathway to it may be obstructed.

SCIA have been approaching businesses, councils, the wider community and disability organisations to help find and visit the toilets, gather data, educate owners and take photos. More information on the map can be found online or by contacting Kelly McCann at SCIA (see fact box).
Community

Item 7: Disability Educational Initiatives Showcase

In the lead up to the International Day for People with a Disability, the Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) is hosting an Educational Initiatives Showcase to highlight their work. Council Policy Officers working on Disability are encouraged to attend.

PDCN encourages people to come to this showcase to meet those working behind the scenes and to find out more about PDCN work and activities. Their latest initiatives include:

Website – I’m Okay
This award-winning emergency readiness website provides information and tools that are useful and practical, to assist people with disability in being prepared in emergency situations including fires, bush fires, storms, and personal safety.

Publication – Words Matter
This publication is the fourth edition of a language guide developed by people with disability to highlight the importance of inclusive and respectful language for anyone who writes about, talks about, or talks to people with disability.

Report – 2014 Impact of Ageing on the Needs of People with Physical Disability
This report investigates the impact of ageing on people with physical disability in relation to their needs for assistance, housing, transport, infrastructure, social and economic participation, the built environment and suitable housing.

DVD – Dementia and People Living with a Disability
Developed in partnership with Alzheimer’s Australia NSW, this DVD will be used as an educational tool for individuals and will also inform the broader community about dementia.

Date
Wednesday 26 November 2014

Location
Benledi Meeting Room
Glebe Library, 186 Glebe Point Road,
Glebe NSW

Online information

Contact
02 9552 1606
admin@pdcnsw.org.au

Ref: R05/0055 MK
Environment

Item 8: Finalists’ Forum Program Now Available

The LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards includes a Finalists’ Forum featuring presentations by a selection of 2014 finalists.

The Finalists’ Forum provides an opportunity to hear about the innovation and creativity across NSW councils in managing and protecting the environment.

All councillors and council staff with an interest in such issues are encouraged to attend.

The Forum will be held from 9am – 12.15pm. This will be followed by the Award presentation lunch, which commences at 12.30pm and concludes at approximately 3pm.

The full program and registration details, including ticket prices, are available online (see fact box).

Date
Tuesday 2 December 2014

Location
UTS Aerial Function Centre, Sydney

Cost
$77 per person – full-day registration
$33 per person – Finalists’ Forum only

Online information and registration
lgnsw.org.au/events-
training/environment-awards

Contact
Denise Anderson
02 9242 4056
denise.anderson@lgnsw.org.au

Ref: R98/0021 DA
Environment

Item 9: Councils Shine at Green Globes Awards

The NSW Government’s Green Globe Awards recognise environmental excellence, leadership and innovation in NSW. Councils have shown they are at the forefront of these environmental areas, winning many Award categories and also receiving highly-commended honours.

The NSW Environment and Heritage Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, congratulated the 25 award winners across 16 categories at a gala ceremony on Thursday 30 October at NSW Parliament House.

There were multiple Local Government winners and highly commended projects recognised:

- Wagga Wagga City Council was awarded the 10 Year Sustainability Award for its ongoing commitment to the environment.
- Gosford City Council received the coveted Regional Sustainability Award (not for nomination) for its project on stormwater harnessing for sustainable water management. They were also a joint winner of the Built Environment Sustainability – Infrastructure Award.
- City of Sydney received the Local Government Sustainability Award (for the second year running), for its Sustainable Fleet Program. City of Sydney’s Better Buildings Partnership project also saw them highly commended in the Built Environment Sustainability – Commercial and Residential category.
- Tweed Shire Council was a joint winner of the Natural Environment Sustainability Award for its Tweed Byron Koala Connections project.
- Warringah Council was a joint winner of the Built Environment Sustainability – Infrastructure Award for its Warringah Creative Space project.
- Bankstown City Council was highly commended in the Environmental Innovation category for their project, Bankstown City Council: We Like our Parks Litter Free.

A number of councils were also recognised as finalists in the following categories:

- Waste and Recycling Award finalist – Lismore City Council
- Local Government Sustainability Award finalists – Byron Shire Council and Hurstville City Council
- Built Environment Sustainability - Infrastructure Award finalist – Waverley Council
- Natural Environment Sustainability Award finalists – Bathurst Regional Council and Parramatta City Council.

Congratulations to all the winners and finalists for leading the way and demonstrating how environmental sustainability can bring social and economic benefits to the community.
Environment

Item 10: New Flying-fox Camp Management Policy for Comment

The NSW Environment and Heritage Minister, the Hon Rob Stokes MP, has announced a new policy to minimise the impacts of flying-fox camps surrounding populated areas. LGNSW will be hosting a briefing by OEH on the policy for interested councils in Sydney on Thursday 20 November 2014.

The Flying-fox Camp Management Policy 2014 encourages councils to prepare camp management plans for sites where there is a high level of impact on the community.

It recognises that active management is needed where flying-fox camps are close to urban settlements, causing noise, odour and potentially putting health at risk.

The policy has been developed with human health as the first priority, with Camp Management Plans intended to empower councils to resolve issues within their communities and take appropriate local action at the earliest opportunity.

Flying-foxes are still protected under legislation. This new policy provides greater flexibility to land managers and allows them to take a longer-term approach to camp management by streamlining licensing. Completing a Camp Management Plan template PDF will allow land managers to be granted a five-year licence for most actions (see fact box).

The Flying-fox Camp Management Policy 2014 differs from the old 2007 policy in its focus on minimising the impacts of camps on people; its longer-term approach to camp management and streamlining of licensing; and its acknowledgement that camp dispersal may be a successful way of removing impacts on local communities.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) will provide ongoing support to land managers and communities, including a suite of online resources and advice for preparing camp management plans and local contacts, to assist councils.

LGNSW will be hosting a briefing by OEH staff for interested councils in Sydney on Thursday 20 November 2014 from 10am-12pm. Online registration is now open (see fact box).

The Flying-fox Camp Management Policy is on public exhibition until Monday 1 December 2014 (see fact box). LGNSW will prepare a submission based on comments received from NSW councils. Please email these to Kirsty McIntyre at LGNSW by Monday 24 November (see fact box).

[Top]
Learning

Item 11: Learning and Development Network Meeting – Monday 8 December 2014

The next LGNSW Learning and Development Network and the Government Training Advisory Network (GTAN) meetings are scheduled for the same day.

The Learning and Development Network is sponsored by LGNSW to promote the learning and development of training professionals in our industry.

The Learning and Development Network’s next meeting will feature:

- Australian HR Manager of the Year – Simone Cook, Manager People, Learning and Culture for Bankstown City Council. She will present an overview of the initiatives which supported her council winning both this national Award as well as the AR Bluett Memorial Award.

- Focus on Workforce Planning – the purpose of this hands-on workshop will be to review your council’s Workforce Plan, compare it with colleagues from other councils, and explore and discuss implications of these plans for learning and development.

LGNSW and the NSW Public Sector Industry Training Advisory Body have arranged the opportunity for council staff to attend the NSW Government Training and Assessment Network (GTAN) meeting immediately following the Local Government Learning and Development Network meeting.

The GTAN aims to increase understanding and use of vocational education and training by government organisations, to facilitate partnerships between government agencies and Registered Training Organisations and to provide professional development opportunities for trainers.
Learning

Item 12: In-house Training Services – Conflict Resolution Skills

LGNSW Learning Solutions offers the following workshops to help staff with conflict resolution skills.

Conflict is a natural part of life and if managed well it can be a constructive force for positive change. The case studies, examples, discussions and questionnaires used in the following workshops are based around the Local Government sector to ensure better transfer of learning back into the workplace.

Assertiveness Skills

Do you want to communicate clearly and confidently? Would you like to get your ideas across in a respectful, considerate and confident way? Would you benefit from feeling more in control of yourself when talking with others? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this program is for you.

Conflict Resolution Skills

This practical one-day workshop is a great introduction to effective conflict resolution tools and techniques. The workshop is designed to equip you to manage general conflict more effectively in the workplace.

Verbal Judo for Contact Professionals

Verbal Judo is one of our most requested programs. This one-day program teaches a set of specific behaviours and tactics, which staff can use to redirect hostile or aggressive behaviour of others, and generate voluntary compliance. Rangers and other compliance staff, including child care and customer service employees, librarians, development planners, and health and building staff have all benefited from attending this workshop.

Handling Difficult People

Staff looking to be more assertive with clients and colleagues and who want to improve their communication skills should attend this workshop. Additionally, anyone who deals with the public should be given the opportunity to attend this hands-on Local Government oriented workshop.

Contact LGNSW Learning Solutions for a quote to have these workshops delivered at your council.

Contact
LGNSW Learning Solutions
02 9242 4181
learning@lgnsw.org.au
Ref: I98/0012 SA

Online information
lgnsw.org.au/events-training/house-training-service

[Top]
Learning

Item 13: Staff Training Courses in November and December

LGNSW Learning Solutions is facilitating the following courses on issues facing Local Government staff.

Selection Skills for Local Government
Dubbo – Thursday 20 November 2014

This workshop aims to provide managers with the skills and knowledge they need to conduct an effective selection process within the Local Government context.

The workshop aims to provide managers with the skills required to:

- Ensure that vacant positions are appropriately described and that job descriptions are available for each position
- Advertise for vacancies in the most effective manner, noting the essential and desirable job criteria
- Carry out all pre-interview arrangements in an effective manner
- Shortlist in an equitable manner based on the selection criteria
- Ensure that interviewers are skilled in asking questions that bring out the best in applicants and relate directly to the selection criteria
- Conduct appropriate post-interview procedures to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Introduction to Local Government
Sydney – Tuesday 2 December 2014

This workshop will provide participants with a working knowledge of the diversity of functions provided by Local Government. It will also improve their customer service skills and enhance their internal communications skillset. This workshop will benefit new or recently appointed council employees from a broader organisational perspective.

Other Upcoming Workshops

- Learning and Development Network Meeting – Monday 8 December 2014 in Sydney

If your council is in need of these workshops but the dates or locations don’t suit, contact us to schedule them locally or provide you with an in-house quote (see fact box).
Planning

Item 14: Course for Planners and Related Professionals

Local Government practitioners are encouraged to attend a two-day course titled, ‘Pillars of Planning – An Introduction’. Sponsored by the Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E), the course is being run at locations across NSW as part of the Department’s PlanEd program.

The two-day course aims to refresh and update knowledge around the following four themes:

1. Evidence Based Strategic Planning
2. Economic and Social Planning
3. Design Quality
4. Environment and Heritage.

Delivered by lecturers in urban and regional planning from the University of New England, and having been piloted with practitioners, the course provides a mix of theory and practical application through case studies and field work, and will also contain an e-learning element.

The course is subsidised by the DP&E at a total cost of $85 (incl. GST) and is intended to update skills and provide a networking opportunity with other planning professionals.

It is predominantly aimed at planners practising in both Local and State Government roles. Dates and locations for courses are as follows:

- Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 November in Sydney
- Thursday 13 and Friday 14 November in Sydney
- Monday 1 and Tuesday 2 December in Dubbo
- Thursday 4 and Friday 5 December in Newcastle
- Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 December in Coffs Harbour
- 2015 – Sessions are being planned in Wollongong, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Queanbeyan and Parramatta.

For more information on how to enrol and about other PlanEd courses, visit the DP&E website or contact Cheramie Marsden (see fact box).

Online information

Cost
$85 (incl. GST)

DP&E course contact
Cheramie Marsden
cheramie.marsden@planning.nsw.gov.au
02 9228 6458

Ref: R14/0002 JP
Roads and Transport

Item 15: Fixing Country Roads – Councils Called to Submit Full Applications

The Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon Duncan Gay MLC, has announced selected councils across regional NSW have been invited to submit full applications as part of the NSW Government’s $37.5 million Fixing Country Roads program.

It has been announced that 107 Fixing Country Roads Expressions of Interest (EOIs) have been shortlisted for their capacity to meet the following four program criteria:

1. Improved Access and Productivity
2. Growth and Economic Benefits
3. Strategic Alignment and Partnership
4. Deliverability and Project Readiness.

The $37.5 million Fixing Country Roads program is in addition to existing funding already committed in grants to councils. Funding within Fixing Country Roads will be allocated to successful councils based on the recommendations of an Independent Assessment Panel.

The Assessment Panel is made up of representatives from the NSW Farmers Association, Livestock and Bulk Carriers Association of NSW, Infrastructure NSW, senior officials from Transport for NSW Freight and Regional Development, the Office of Local Government and a Local Government representative.

The Assessment Panel met last week and shortlisted councils will be invited to submit a full application for final evaluation. This evaluation will include a final cost-benefit appraisal and a focus on delivering clearly defined planning and construction schedules.

Councils that have been shortlisted are encouraged to attend the full application information sessions that will be held in regional NSW locations, including Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Maitland, Coffs Harbour and Batemans Bay.

Evaluation sessions have also been organised for councils whose projects have not been shortlisted this year. The objective of the evaluation sessions is to provide feedback to councils about their applications and the assessment process, and encourage them to re-submit their proposals in subsequent rounds of the Fixing Country Roads program.

101 out of 107 eligible regional councils submitted EOIs for 249 project proposals to Fixing Country Roads. Of these 249 project proposals, 107 have been invited to proceed with final applications.

Until the Independent Assessment Panel delivers its final funding recommendations to Government in January 2015, project proposals will remain commercial-in-confidence.

More information, including application forms and the schedule of information sessions, can be found online (see fact box).
In the News

Item 16: Local Government NSW Media

View the latest media releases distributed by LGNSW

Media Release: NSW councils supporting Asbestos Awareness month
Thursday 6 November 2014


November is National Asbestos Awareness month and Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is supporting the cause by equipping councils with the skills to safely manage asbestos through specialist asbestos management workshops and the Model Asbestos Policy for NSW Councils.