



# **EPLGA BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

From the meeting held at Cleve on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2014

## **Community Wastewater Management Schemes (CWMS) Regional Users Group**

The initial two CWMS user's group meetings have been very successful with full participation. In the future we might see all Councils CWMS on EP as one business unit managed by a regional manager. The future model would be driven by whether there was a potential for cost savings, better management opportunities for the schemes through utilizing the appropriate expertise available, collaborative purchasing etc. If there was to be a single regional business unit this would possibly result in one consistent CWMS charge across the Peninsula.

## **Internal Financial Controls Working Group**

A Financial Internal Controls Workgroup has been established with all eleven regional councils participating. This group is responsible for investigating and implementing the legislative requirements for all regional councils to have internal financial controls adopted by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Outside expert assistance is being sought to assist Councils in the establishment of the controls but more importantly the establishment of a monitoring & evaluation system once the controls are adopted to ensure continuous improvement in the financial controls.

## **Chief Executive Officers Committee**

The Chief Executive Officer Committee meets three times per year on the afternoon prior to the EPLGA Board meetings, excepting the EPLGA Conference meeting. This committee discusses a number of operational matters. The recent meeting had a very interesting and interactive agenda which included:-

- Discussion on the Outreach Services pilot undertaken by the EPLGA Executive Officer
- A report from Geoff Dodd, Coordinator of the EP Mining, Oil & Gas Taskforce on progress being made in that area of regional business
- Internal Financial Controls working group progress report
- Local Government Elections progress & training requirements
- The development of a regional preferred suppliers register progress report
- Regional Procurement Road Map project update
- Roadside Weed Management report emanating from the recent LGA meetings with various State agencies
- Regional Transport Plan project update
- Regional Statement development update
- EPLGA Annual Report preparation update
- Regional Risk Coordinators report on progress in individual councils in relation to risk management and work health & safety.
- LGA planned Bushfire Support Training & iResponda training requirements prior to the bushfire season

- The establishment of a fighting fund for legal challenges to Councils in the planning and other areas where the outcome could be of industry benefit (not supported by the meeting)
- Railway Crossings Interface Agreements as provide by Genesee Wyoming and the ramifications to Councils.
- Presentations were delivered from the following:  
Dialog Information Technology and Andrew Haste, LGA Training.

The CEO Committee meetings are leading to better collaboration amongst Councils with the sharing of information, expertise & resources.

### **Mobile Black Spots**

The EPLGA & RDA Whyalla & Eyre Peninsula made a joint Mobile black spot submission; RDAWEP's Bob Ramsay did a submission on behalf of the EPLGA and RDAWEP. The Executive Officer of the EPLGA & Executive Staff from the RDA Whyalla & Eyre Peninsula met with Telstra staff and raised different issues including the mobile phone black spots issues.

### **ESCOSA Drinking Water Inquiry**

On 24 September 2012, the Treasurer of South Australia referred to the Essential Services Commission (the Commission) an Inquiry into pricing reform for drinking water and sewerage retail services provided by SA Water.

The EPLGA Executive Officer and other Chief Executive Officers of Councils have been attending the consultation sessions on this inquiry. In very broad and general terms what the inquiry is proposing if adopted, would see a significant reduction in cost/kl of water but an increase in the individual property service charge based on the size of their connection. Hence large users of water like industry will probably benefit but not individual households based on water usage charge reductions. In rental properties the tenants would be responsible for all water costs and any outstanding debt would be pursued in the Civil Courts, not as a debt against property as it is now. This would also apply to Council owned Community Wastewater Management Scheme's (CWMS) which would add significant legal costs to Councils. The other issue for Council owned and operated CWMS is that only those connected would pay towards the service when currently unoccupied properties also contribute to the costs of the CWMS. Therefore there would be a significant increase in costs to those connected to cover for those who currently pay but are not connected but are in the service area. The other issue is for the region is that it is proposed that each individual separate regional water supply scheme (like Eyre Peninsula's), the consumers connected to it will be paying the actual cost of running that network or scheme. The question raised was, is SA Water prudent and efficient in this region and would the current maintenance due to the state of the scheme have a significant financial impact on the regions users? Individual Councils were encouraged to also put in their own submissions.

### **Outreach Services Update**

This pilot project has undertaken many and varied projects to assist Councils to become compliant but to also investigate ways for continual improvement and efficiencies. This has meant work being undertaken at investigating innovative ways of making savings to Councils so they can meet the ever increasing demands they face.

The recent regional project to assist individual Councils to be compliant with asset management and long term financial planning will be reviewed as a CEO group in 12 months time. Currently most of the regions Council are compliant in this area.

The EP Mining, Oil & Gas Taskforce call nominations for two local government representatives; a Mayoral and CEO position on the Taskforce. Chairperson Eleanor Scholz from the Wudinna District Council and City of Whyalla's CEO Peter Peppin have been appointed to the Taskforce. Mr Geoff Dodd the Coordinator is hoping to have the inaugural Taskforce meeting in October 2014. The Taskforce's main objectives are to:

- Provide a single and strengthened strategic forum for information sharing as to the development of mine sites, infrastructure and community impacts;
- Assist Local Government in preparatory strategic planning for housing and support services;
- Provide a focus to all State agencies activity (e.g., education, healthy, police) as a result of mining proceeding and thereby provide support to the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association (EPLGA) and Regional Development Australia Whyalla & Eyre Peninsula (RDAWEP) as they address local strategic issues.
- Ensure strategic actions are being undertaken to address the recommendations and issues raised at the Taskforce table.
- Propose strategic ways to build on stakeholder & community engagement with a view to meeting regional long term needs
- Determine clear strategic roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in relation to a developing regional mining industry
- Develop strategic recommendations where required – to be considered by the mining industry, RDAWEP, EPLGA, State & Local Government to encourage sustainable regional economical growth.
- Assist in the regional coordination of State & Local Government and agencies to avoid duplication and unnecessary “red tape” to optimise a quality return for the region.

Discussion took place on life after the outreach pilot funding ceases as at 30 June 2015. The LGA of SA contributes \$70,000 per year through the EPLGA to cover 2 additional days per week for the Executive Officer to deliver the Outreach Services. Councils were asked to consider:

- Whether the Outreach Services has assisted them or not. Most considered it has but the President will organize for a confidential survey to be prepared for the councils to make formal response to this question.
- If the funding ceases does the Executive Officer return to his substantive position of three days per week
- Do Councils continue to support the Executive Officer position at 5 days per week by contributing more funding themselves or seeking other funding sources.

President, Julie Low asked Councils to think very carefully about this matter because there are a number of major issues either facing or about to face Eyre Peninsula's Councils where a strong regional voice, strong administration and support will be certainly required. The LGA of SA believes the Outreach Services Pilot has been very successful from their perspective and there has been tremendous savings to the LGA and regional Councils through the projects undertaken and managed by the Executive Officer of the EPLGA. The Executive Officer's current employment contract was extended from the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to coincide with the Outreach Services Pilot conclusion date of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

The President and Executive Officer of the EPLGA were authorised to undertake dialogue with the LGA of SA and others to seek alternative funding solutions to ensuring that Outreach Services are continued beyond 30 June 2015.

#### **Care, Control and Management of Roads – Commissioner of Highways Operational Instruction 20.1 - Section 26 Highways Act**

Mr Rod Pearson, Chief Executive Officer, District Council of Lower Eyre Peninsula (DCLEP) spoke to a report prepared by his Council in relation to a Commissioner of Highways Operational Instruction that stipulates Councils need to take care, control and management of roads, excepting the carriageway. This Operational Instruction has been raised by DCLEP to try and seek clarification on Councils level of responsibility for arterial or highways roads. The EPLGA Executive Officer has had the matter placed on the South Australian Organisation of Regional Councils meeting agenda set down for 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014 with a recommendation that: - the LGA of SA Secretariat are to engage with the Minister for Transport and Department of Planning Transport and infrastructure to facilitate resolution to the lack of clarity around operational responsibility for public roads. This matter could have serious cost shifting implications for Councils.

#### **Local Government Association of South Australia – Andrew Haste**

Mr Haste expressed gratitude to Eyre Peninsula, Port Lincoln and the LGA for the great job done at the Works Conference. There were approximately 70 media hits from the conference which is good promotion for the region.

Mr Haste also advised that Mrs. Wendy Campana, CEO and the President Mayor David O'Loughlin of the LGA have been in Canberra pursuing the Federal Government budget cuts to the Councils supplementary road funding which hits the small rural Councils very hard. The LGA is continuing to work hard towards providing more information around how the funds are being distributed and putting a case back to the Federal Government to get the money reinstated.

#### **Minister Brock- Minister for Local Government and Regional Development**

Minister Brock addressed the meeting on various matters. He too has led a delegation to the Federal Government and has spoken to the LGA of SA about the Supplementary Roads Funding cuts and possible ways of having this reinstated. The Minister stated that the South Australian regions have been hurt the hardest by the Federal Budget and as a result these regional Councils are under a lot of strain and have some great challenges ahead of them. Minister Brock urges all Mayors, Councils and regional Associations to be very vocal and united in speaking up for their regions. South Australian Councils in relation to road funding are the lowest funded in Australia whether per capita or per km of road.

Minister Brock also addressed the proposed legislation relating to the mandatory training for elected members after the Local Government elections. In early 2015, in consultation with Regional Local Government Associations and the LGA of SA, Minister Brock also intends to review the Local Government Act of 1999. He believes it is time for an extensive review of the Act which in his opinion lacks in giving more responsibility to Councils in certain areas.

EPLGA Executive Officer, Tony Irvine brought to attention the rumour of TAFE SA planning serious staff cuts in the regions. He explained that our region needs training now more than ever, particularly with the growth in mining activity. Minister Brock replied that any change to the regions, like the rumoured TAFE jobs cuts has to have an Economic Regional

Impact Statement prepared prior to any action be undertaken and such a statement also has to be approved by Cabinet.

President Mayor Julie Low pointed out that the funding ratio benchmark was too high for many councils to apply for the Minister's Regional Development Grants which resulted in councils missing out on worthy projects. Minister Brock responded that the criteria will be reviewed for next year's rounds of funding calls. He welcomes any ideas from the EPLGA or other associations as to how they could facilitate more opportunities for councils.

District Council of Ceduna, Mayor Suter stated that a lot has been said about the effect that the Native Vegetation SEB offset has on council's budgets. A further effect is that this will be a disincentive for people to undertake developments in the regional areas. Minister responded that he is happy to receive submissions on this even though it is not his portfolio and that he would as the Minister for Regional Development ensure it reached the relevant Minister and would certainly raise issues with that Minister where it could have an effect on economic development in the regions.

Minister Brock also encouraged members present to promote the forthcoming Local council elections.

#### **Office of State Local Government Relations – Mick Petrovski**

Mr. Mick Petrovski also further explained the work being undertaken in his area for the re-instatement of the road funding.

The Office of State Local Government Relations are reviewing the Codes of Conduct and developing legislative amendments that will be introduced into parliament in the first half of 2015. Comments are being sought from Council CEO's in particular about what some of the proposed amendments mean for them and how they will impact upon their Councils.

Mr Petrovski also addressed the meeting on the State Government review of all Boards & Committees, highlighting the three most critical boards that affect the Local Government sector are the Local Government Grants Commission, the Boundary Adjustment Facilitation Panel and the Outback Communities Authority. Cabinet is yet to consider the recommendations from Ministers about the future of these boards.

#### **Regional Development Australia Whyalla and Eyre Peninsula Inc. (RDAWEP) – Mr. Bob Ramsay**

The new RDAWEP, Business Plan is part of a transition that RDAWEP has gone through over the last 12 months where their planning and reporting has been rationalised and streamlined.

Mr Ramsay is currently finalising a new Regional Plan which is an important step towards putting together a Regional Statement. Through these processes the EPLGA and RDAWEP have strengthened their working relationship and significant benefits for Local Government will be the results of such relationship. The Regional Statement is about strengthening and arguing the worth of Eyre Peninsula including strong, evidence-based data.

Mr. Ramsay has developed a spreadsheet which allows a tracking system to identify what Local Government & private projects are planned, is spade-ready and do they align with grant funding programs.

## **Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board – Mrs. Heather Baldock**

Mrs. Baldock advised that the regions Natural Resource Management Plan and Water Allocation Plan are progressing well. The Board has endorsed the release of the consultation draft for the Water Allocation Plan for the Southern Basins and Musgrave Prescribed Wells areas. The EP Water Security Reference Group meeting was held in Wudinna in early July and Mrs. Baldock gave commendation to Councils for their strong attendance. She also advised that a presentation at the Reference Group meeting in relation to the regions water Supply and Demand Statement showed that EP's water supply over demand has improved from the previous year with drinking water supply currently considered secure to 2024/25.

Mrs. Baldock also touched on how the Department for Environment Water & Natural Resources has had considerable budget cuts over the past couple of years. In the past eight months, the regional NRM Board Presiding Members have been involved in discussions about where savings made might that have the least impact on programs which are most valuable to communities.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Friday 5th December at Wudinna

### **Contact Details:**

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