

BETTER COUNCILS, BETTER COMMUNITIES



3/12/2015

Submission to the 2016-17 Tasmanian State
Budget

Better councils, better communities

2016-17 STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION

SUMMARY OF COMMITMENTS SOUGHT BY LGAT

Priority

Fully resourcing the Planning Schemes Online Project to support implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme

Continued co-funding feasibility studies related to voluntary mergers and strategic resource sharing

Critical

Adequate resourcing of the Local Government Division

Resourcing the completion and implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and associated policies, communications, tools, and training

Investment in the development of State Policies to provide the overarching direction for sustainable land use and development

Resourcing of a separate Planning Policy Unit

Clarification of the uncertainty around future ownership, maintenance and upkeep of former Forestry Tasmania roads (now managed by Parks) through the audit of roads being undertaken by Infrastructure Tasmania, without significant new and unfunded infrastructure burden placed with Local Government

Support Local Government to address the infrastructure upgrades and replacements identified through the recently completed Local Bridge Assessment Project, including joint advocacy to the Federal Government

Significant

Commitment to fund future transactional costs of voluntary mergers

Commitment to fund future transformation costs of mergers identified as meeting the agreed principles and delivering good outcomes for communities

Resourcing further legislative review aimed at improving planning outcomes

Maintain current State road maintenance funding levels and ensure appropriate funding to upgrade State roads, particularly those linked to popular tourist routes

Support and work with Local Government on the development and implementation of a regionally integrated freight and transport strategy

Support for community infrastructure projects of state significance including the Copping C-Cell and addressing the waste tyre legacy

Communication and collaboration, with Local Government, on education reform activities at a local and state-wide level

Progression of projects identified in the Role of Local Government Project Strategic Action plan which support improved economic development outcomes

Involvement in mapping and supporting the ongoing role for Local Government's regional authorities as relate to economic development and tourism

Important beyond Local Government

Make changes to the water and sewerage regulatory framework (in line with TasWater's submissions) to allow pricing outcomes to be linked to TasWater's long term infrastructure and financial planning

Support TasWater in lobbying the Federal Government for funding of the Launceston Sewerage Improvement Project

Continued investment in improved educational completion and attainment

Improved collaboration in relation to tourism strategies; developing private investment opportunities; assisting with marketing and events development; education and training and appropriate funding

Support for collaborative building of Age Friendly Cities

Immediate development of the five year strategic plan for Preventative Health in Tasmania, accompanied by an increase in the preventive health budget

SPECIFIC REGIONAL PRIORITIES

New Bridgewater Bridge

Sealing of the Highland Lakes Road

Upgrade of the Airport Roundabout (Hobart)

Channel Highway re-direction at Huonville

Development of a greater Hobart Transport Plan

Promoting regional dispersal of tourists

Construction of the Copping C Cell

Securing more defence manufacturing contracts

Continued upgrade and restoration of Willow Court

Partnership on the Cradle Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

INTRODUCTION

In the early years Local Government was responsible for building roads for newly formed towns, rural roads, wharves, jetties and bridges. The logic of the colonial masters, that local communities should manage issues important at the local level, still applies today. As a consequence, Local Government's role has expanded from building roads, bridges and public buildings to providing a wide range of community services such as sport and recreational facilities, community care, health and welfare services. Increasingly the Commonwealth and State Government's look to Local Government to enforce legislation at the local level and deliver initiatives at the grass roots.

Local Government has a critical role to play in the Tasmanian economy. It has a presence in every part of the state. It is responsible for over 14,000 Km of Tasmania's road network by length; provides governance and public administration at the local level; and provides services, facilities and programs that meet the needs of local residents and visitors. As such it is uniquely positioned to work with the State Government to enhance productivity, build local community infrastructure that will create jobs and underpin the social life of Tasmanians.

Tasmanian councils are focused on increasing their capacity to service their ratepayers. Collectively the sector is identifying ways to share resources, deliver savings through more effective purchasing, reduce duplication in relation to operational policies and procedures and deliver innovation which enhances capacity or reduces costs.

In any given day a council is likely managing roads, streets, pavements, traffic lights, bridges and car parks. It is making sure stormwater and drainage systems don't fail. It is recycling and managing waste. It works with communities to create a blueprint to guide the use of land to achieve a balance of economic, environmental and community values, and that buildings are of the required standard. It is considering how climate change might impact on the community and how to mitigate the effects for the next generation. It will be undertaking local environmental management initiatives, conserving biodiversity and water. It will be geared up to help communities prepare for and recover from natural disasters. It will be providing cultural and sporting venues, events and opportunities. It is immunizing children, ensuring drinking water is safe and that where people eat is not going to make them sick.

Many councils' provide social welfare programs such as childcare, aged care, community gardens and youth programs. They will be actively working to ensure vibrant communities through economic development and tourism programs. The list goes on.

Governing our communities, coordinating capital projects and delivering efficient and effective public services requires a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and a joint commitment to outcomes. Tasmanian Local Government is a responsible strategic partner for the State in maximising its public infrastructure and service delivery investments as well as its reform agenda.

Tasmanian councils are committed to continuous improvement, and as the recent Auditor General's report shows, are making progress particularly as relates to financial sustainability. We have worked with the State Government previously on significant changes, such as the establishment of a single water and sewerage corporation and electoral reform. We have contributed significant resources to planning reform through direct funding of a member of the drafting team and participation on the technical reference group and the Planning Taskforce as well as the Planning Schemes online Steering Committee.

Even while there is much debate and consideration of improvement processes, councils will continue to perform a wide range of roles within Tasmania – some of which are driven by statutory or regulatory requirements and others which are more discretionary and have evolved out of the unique relationship with its local communities.

Councils will be supported in undertaking their diverse roles by the Local Government Association of Tasmania. The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) advocates and negotiates on behalf of the Tasmanian Local Government sector. We represent all Tasmanian councils with 262 elected members, nearly 4000 employees and half a million constituents. One of the key objectives of LGAT is to foster and promote relationships between Tasmanian Local Government with both the Governments of Tasmania and Australia.

LGAT works closely with other key Local Government bodies, such as Local Government Professionals Australia (Tasmania), and the three regional authorities, Think South (STCA), the Cradle Coast Authority and Northern Tasmanian Development. Collectively, we are working to ensure the best possible outcomes for our members and their communities. Each organization has had opportunity to provide input into this submission.

The Local Government sector recognizes that the current economic climate is not one that is conducive to ambit claims for funding, but rather, one that seeks a range of investments that will serve the State well in increasing productivity and securing the wellbeing of all communities.

Local Government suggests that the following investments will meet those criteria:

<p>Reform</p>	<p>Continued co-funding feasibility studies related to voluntary mergers and strategic resource sharing</p> <p>Commitment to fund future transactional costs of voluntary mergers. That is, those associated with deciding whether or not a merger should proceed including consultant reports, feasibility studies, community consultation and referenda, Local Government Board review.</p> <p>Commitment to fund future transformation costs of mergers identified as meeting the agreed principles and delivering good outcomes for communities. That is, those costs related to implementation.</p> <p>Adequate resourcing of the Local Government Division</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<p>Resourcing the completion and implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and associated policies, communications, tools, and training</p> <p>Resourcing further legislative review aimed at improving planning outcomes</p> <p>Fully resourcing the Planning Schemes Online Project to support implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme</p> <p>Investment in the development of State Policies to provide the overarching direction for sustainable land use and development</p> <p>Resourcing of a separate Planning Policy Unit</p>
<p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>Maintain current State road maintenance funding levels and ensure appropriate</p>

	<p>funding to upgrade State roads, particularly those linked to popular tourist routes</p> <p>Support and work with Local Government on the development and implementation of a regionally integrated freight and transport strategy</p> <p>Clarification of the uncertainty around future ownership, maintenance and upkeep of former Forestry Tasmania roads (now managed by Parks) through the audit of roads being undertaken by Infrastructure Tasmania without significant new and unfunded infrastructure burden placed with Local Government.</p> <p>Support Local Government to address the infrastructure upgrades and replacements identified through the recently completed Local Bridge Assessment Project, including joint advocacy to the Federal Government</p> <p>Make changes to the water and sewerage regulatory framework (in line with TasWater’s submissions) to allow pricing outcomes to be linked to TasWater’s long term infrastructure and financial planning</p> <p>Support TasWater in lobbying the Federal Government for funding of the Launceston Sewerage Improvement Project</p> <p>Support for community infrastructure projects of state significance including the Copping C-Cell and addressing the waste tyre legacy</p>
<p>Better Communities</p>	<p>Continued investment in improved educational completion and attainment</p> <p>Communication and collaboration, with Local Government, on education reform activities at a local and state-wide level</p> <p>Support for collaborative building of Age Friendly Cities</p> <p>Immediate development of the five year strategic plan for Preventative Health in Tasmania, accompanied by an increase in the preventive health budget from the current 2.6% of the total health budget to 5% over the next five years.</p> <p>Progression of projects identified in the Role of Local Government Project Strategic Action plan which support improved economic development outcomes</p> <p>Improved collaboration in relation to tourism strategies; developing private investment opportunities; assisting with marketing and events development; education and training and appropriate funding</p> <p>Involvement in mapping and supporting the ongoing role for Local Government’s regional authorities as relate to economic development and tourism</p>



Reform

VOLUNTARY MERGERS/STRATEGIC RESOURCE SHARING

The council and community conversations about reform have undoubtedly been slower than anticipated. In large part, this is a reflection of the complexity of the task. We welcome the Government's ongoing commitment to an evidence based dialogue, which includes councils and communities.

The starting principles outlined by the State Government remain critical. That is:

- Any change must be in the interest of rate payers;
- Any change must improve the level of services for communities;
- Any change must preserve and maintain local representation; and
- Any change must ensure that the financial status of the entities is strengthened.

The Local Government Association has supported members in this early deliberative phase through hosting a forum and producing a literature review. Once councils have moved down particular paths, LGAT will have a clearer indication of what further support will be needed for the sector ongoing.

As the closest level of government to the community, councils are in a unique position to identify community needs and make sure those needs are met. As a consequence, no two councils are exactly the same and that difference can be what makes a council special to those who live in the municipality. This is not to say there is not opportunity for reform, in Tasmania and nationally. But the argument to simply change geographic boundaries is a simplistic one that fails to strategically take into account the community and operational drivers of a complex and diverse business.

It is evident from all the research on Local Government reform is that in order for amalgamations to be successful the new entities must be carefully designed, have a strong level of community support and be viable. Further the cost of deciding whether or not to merge as well as the cost of implementation must be well understood and minimised. There has been a significant history of underestimating these costs and overestimating the potential savings.

What is becoming clear is that the cost of feasibility studies is quite significant – even with councils contributing 50%, the initial allocation by the Government will not allow all the proposals on the table to be tested. There should be a sense of whether amalgamations of some councils meet the required principles by the end of June. Adequate funding of the Local Government Board to conduct the next, and required stage of analysis, is vital. There will be costs to councils in relation to further refining proposals, undertaking related analysis and community consultation and imputing into the Board's process.

LGAT would like to flag that while not an issue for this budget period, if there is agreement to proceed with any amalgamations at the end of the Board process, this is where the real costs begin. The experience of amalgamation in other Australian jurisdictions provides evidence of significant up-front costs and outcomes which are not quantifiable in terms of profit or reduced rates. In fact evidence clearly shows that rates reductions are never an outcome of amalgamation however improved capability, service and infrastructure outcomes and economies of scale generally result. It is incumbent on the State Government to make sure there is not a repetition of the failure to meet the expected outcomes of amalgamation as has been seen in other jurisdictions. Communities need to clearly understand what benefits will and won't be delivered.

The most significant costs identified in implementing mergers in other jurisdictions relate to wage parity, ICT/systems changes, senior officer costs and redundancies, new buildings/renovations/relocations, change management and communication, statutory plans, branding and payroll tax. The impact on Financial Assistance Grants also needs consideration.

Local Government would not want to see the Western Australian debt financing model implemented in Tasmania. We consider this is inappropriate, because it unfairly burdens ratepayers of the new Local Governments with the costs of reform. Recent experience suggests that even relatively simple amalgamations have a multi-million dollar implementation cost. If the State is to achieve the successful implementation of its ambitions for Local Government reform, it must provide the necessary budget allocations to resource change.

Further resources should also be allocated in the forward estimates for implementation of the Government's reforms pertaining to strategic resource sharing, particularly in supporting councils with the initial burden of transition in what and how services are provided.

SUPPORTING GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Local Government Association of Tasmania looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the State Government, particularly the Local Government Division, in progressing a range of governance improvement projects. These include the Review of the Local Government Act, the implementation of the new Code of Conduct provisions and agreed activities under the Role of Local Government Project Strategic Action Plan. It is important there are sufficient resources within State Government to progress these key projects in a timely manner.

This is particularly the case given the diversion of resources to supporting investigations by the Director, Boards of Inquiry and related failures of governance matters. It is vital that the Local Government Division has sufficient human resources to undertake both their statutory role and their supportive, improvement focused agenda.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Continued co-funding feasibility studies related to voluntary mergers and strategic resource sharing.**
- **Commitment to fund future transactional costs of voluntary mergers. That is, those associated with deciding whether or not a merger should proceed including consultant reports, feasibility studies, community consultation and referenda, Local Government Board review.**
- **Commitment to fund future transformation costs of mergers identified as meeting the agreed principles and delivering good outcomes for communities. That is, those costs related to implementation.**
- **Adequate resourcing of the Local Government Division.**



Planning

PLANNING

Local Government plays an important role in land use planning and the development approvals systems in all State jurisdictions in Australia. Councils develop strategic plans for the future development of their municipalities, coordinate and provide physical and community infrastructure, use their strategic plans to guide the application of land use and development zones through State planning instruments and administer the planning instruments on a day-to-day basis.

Over the years, community expectations about the objectives of the planning system have grown. Planning is being relied upon more and more as the solution to complex urban and regional issues and these will only be possible with a commitment by the State Government to meaningful engagement with councils.

Councils are widely thought of by the general public as the masters of the planning system, and while they have a variety of responsibilities under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (LUPAA)* to assess applications and review and update Planning Schemes, in reality the process is currently driven and governed by the State Government. While the vast majority of development applications in Tasmania are approved efficiently and effectively by councils, the development assessment component of the planning system remains the most confrontational and subject to the greatest scrutiny and criticism.

Under a single Tasmanian planning scheme, councils will work with communities and developers to ensure that development is appropriate to the location – it will decide where the zones are applied as well as where there needs to be special consideration of local circumstances. While there will be many more permitted pathways for development, council officers will still be there making sure development complies with the requirements set at the State and Local level.

Councillors will still consider those matters which fall outside the normal parameters and considering the varying views made through representations, determine the best overall outcome for the community in line with their statutory function.

In considering the role of Local Government in planning it is worth remembering that the system is a State one, implemented at the local level by councils as statutory planning authorities; that assessment timeframes in Tasmania are already significantly less than other States and that there is no evidence to directly link current timeframe performance with the rate of development in Tasmania.

Even in the face of what are sometimes scathing criticisms about planning decisions made by councils, much of which is unfounded, Tasmanian councils have continued their commitment to a more efficient and transparent system. Councils continue to demonstrate this, through for example, detailed whole of sector input to recent legislative amendments posited through the Planning Reform Taskforce.

Progressing Planning Reform

The Local Government sector recognizes the commitment of the State Government to implement a single planning scheme and seeks that the implementation be sufficiently resourced and funded. Local Government has found, through the experience of the Regional Planning Initiatives, that significant resourcing and effort at both the local level and the State level is necessary for implementation (e.g. legislative amendments, policy and code development, testing including legal testing, guidance and training, consultation and community communication).

The Planning Schemes Online Project provides significant potential to link the single planning scheme with overlaid codes and local provisions and provide a common entry to the planning system, regardless of which municipality the development is taking place. Its further development would strongly contribute to the Government's faster, simpler mandate. LGAT encourages continued funding of to the vitally important next stage of this project so that the system can reach its full potential and remain reliable and valid.

Further, while the introduction of a single planning scheme has been the focus of the taskforce, a number of other process and legislative issues have been raised that should be addressed if real improvement is to be seen. For example, as raised on a number of occasions one such opportunity relates to better integration of legislation. For example, subdivision provisions are currently specified in the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act* however; they would be better housed in LUPAA. There are also opportunities for process improvement through a two stage permit process.

The planning reform undertaken to date has been overly focused on regulation. A greater investment is required on supporting the State's strategic direction through land use policy to inform planning. A clear articulation of State level aspirations via State Policies, with whole of government support, is essential if real improvement to our planning system is to be realized.

The Resource Management and Planning System was designed to have a suite of state policies implemented through planning schemes, however currently Tasmania has just three (excluding the National Environment Protection Matters) as a result of low levels of investment in State policy development.

The development of the Regional Land Use Strategies was the most significant step the State had taken towards integrated policy development in many years. However, there was little integration between the three strategies and the recent amendments to the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (to facilitate the Tasmanian Planning Scheme) has limited the strategies function to local provisions only. A lack of State policies will also limit consistency of application of the Tasmanian planning scheme as Local Government officers continue to work in a policy vacuum.

The development of State Policies and the ongoing governance and review of the planning reform discussed above must be appropriately resourced if our planning system is to stay current. Once the Tasmanian Planning Scheme has been implemented it will require on-going review and maintenance to maintain its effectiveness, via a dedicated Planning Policy Unit.

Recent experience indicates this unit should rest within State Government, rather than the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC), as when the TPC and the Planning Policy Unit were merged it led to reduced policy resourcing and a greater focus on regulatory function over wider policy analysis. A separately funded and located Planning Policy Unit should ensure this does not occur again.

The TPC should be retained as the independent reviewer of planning legislation.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Resourcing the completion and implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and associated policies, communications, tools, and training.**
- **Resourcing further legislative review aimed at improving planning outcomes.**
- **Fully resourcing the Planning Schemes Online Project to support implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.**
- **Investment in the development of State Policies to provide the overarching direction for sustainable land use and development.**
- **Resourcing of a separate Planning Policy Unit.**



Roads and other Infrastructure

INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Tasmanian councils own and manage more than \$700 million worth of assets (as per the Auditor General's report on Local Government released November 2015); most of which is infrastructure in the form of roads, footpaths, bridges, drains and culverts. Maintaining this infrastructure to support communities and facilitate economic activity is a major financial challenge to councils.

There must be clear signals from State Government on its intended strategic direction in relation to infrastructure management and investment over coming decades. Better roads will save lives. Appropriate investment in utility infrastructure will help reduce the cost of living and make our State more environmentally sustainable. Smart funding and management decisions will drive economic growth and tourism. These matters are not 'term of government' issues but have long-term implications for the coming decades. The need to secure and promote bi- and tri- partisan support and prioritization of these key assets and provide clear messaging to business and communities alike is essential to allow for appropriate planning and investment decisions into the future.

LGAT welcomed the establishment of Infrastructure Tasmania as a vital step in improving coordination, planning and assessment of major infrastructure proposals in Tasmania and notes the engagement of the Minister and CEO with councils in developing the priority work program and integrated freight strategy.

Councils are key stakeholders in infrastructure planning discussions and need to be appraised of the potential growth areas and investment decisions that will impact on their local areas. LGAT seeks ongoing engagement and collaboration between the levels of government early in the decision making processes to ensure that optimum outcomes are achieved for local communities, businesses and the State as a whole.

ROADS

Roads are the arteries of all our communities and in particular are the life blood of our regions. Local Government is responsible for over 14,000 kilometres of road in Tasmania; with over 7,000 kilometres sealed. In rural areas, operational expenditure on roads infrastructure comprises more than 36% of functional expenditure.

Significant components of the Tasmanian road network are bridges and culverts. Many of these assets were not designed to carry the masses presented by today's freight task and heavy vehicle fleet. With the average age of the State's local roads and bridges continuing to increase and the amount of freight vehicle movements also increasing, the risk to infrastructure has become more acute.

Local Government recognises the interconnectedness of transport networks and freight corridors and the importance of identifying and supporting cross-municipality linkages. The sector supports the development and implementation of a regionally integrated freight and transport strategy that seeks to provide seamless access across Tasmania and engenders certainty in broader planning and investment decision-making. There are obvious local and regional productivity improvements that can be derived through investment that improves access for freight vehicles and connectivity between local roads and preferred state and national freight routes.

It must be acknowledged that the freight and transport task forms just one part of Local Government's responsibility as an infrastructure asset manager. This point has been highlighted in recent times with the establishment of a national regulatory framework for heavy vehicles and increased pressure on councils to provide improved access to the heavy vehicle fleet, whilst continuing to manage local road assets within existing physical and fiscal constraints.

LGAT warmly welcomed the State Government's 2015-16 Budget allocation of \$1.7M to assist and support councils in a Local Bridge Assessment Project and the development of strategic road networks for the State's heavy vehicle industry. This Project represents a vital 'first step' towards delivering a sustainable, heavy vehicle access network within the State. The work being undertaken jointly between Tasmanian Local and State Governments to date has been noted among other State jurisdictions and at the national level as a 'best practice' example of the benefits of collaboration between levels of government to address infrastructure and access challenges.

Local Government is committed to working with the State Government to build on this body of work in order to develop a successful state-wide integrated freight network. It should be noted however that strategic regional investment and infrastructure planning to realise this end will require additional resources beyond the capacity of councils. Assessments of local bridges across the State have highlighted those that are not up to the requisite load-bearing standard to accommodate the modern freight vehicle.

Acknowledging the Government's focus on economic growth and the desire to unlock the full potential of the State's business and industry sectors, it is vital that support is given to Local Government to address network 'gaps', and to ensure that upgrades and investments are appropriate and in alignment with regional and state-wide priorities.

The Local Government sector calls on the State Government to ensure adequate investment is made into State-owned roads. Funding should be maintained at least to current levels.

Forestry Roads

An ongoing issue of concern for Local Government in recent times has been the ambiguity surrounding the future management and funding of former Forestry Tasmania roads transferred to the Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE). On behalf of its members the LGAT has continually sought greater clarity from the State Government regarding current and future funding arrangements for these roads, as a significant proportion act as major tourist routes and access points to iconic destinations.

Whilst the LGAT was pleased to see \$8M allocated in 2015 for Parks 'high priority' infrastructure (including roads) and is currently in consultation with the State's Parks and Wildlife Service to determine appropriate investment sites, it must be acknowledged that there is still no 'long term' solution or indication of how these roads should or will be maintained.

The Local Government sector is aware of the audit of the State's road network being undertaken by Infrastructure Tasmania in the first half of 2016, which will include consideration of future arrangements for forestry roads. Local Government anticipated that this audit will result in the appropriate allocation of ongoing State funding to ensure that these roads are maintained to an appropriate level in the long term.

WATER AND SEWERAGE

TasWater is a wholly owned corporation of Local Government. In its capacity as shareholders, but also, and importantly, in its capacity as a primary service provider to ratepayers, Local Government supports the efficient provision of water and sewerage functions to the Tasmanian community and the delivery of sustainable financial returns to its members consistent with the *Water and Sewerage Corporation Act 2012*.

In its provision of water and sewerage services, TasWater must be able to develop and implement long term state-wide infrastructure and financial strategies that will enable the water and sewerage sector to transition to a sustainable position. The current disconnect between the intent and application of the *Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008* requirements regarding price setting and good long term infrastructure and financial planning is hindering TasWater's ability to achieve this. LGAT supports TasWater's review of the regulatory framework and any changes that are required, including to legislation, to correct this disconnect.

There are a number of significant capital upgrade projects required in order to improve existing water and sewerage across the State. Of these, the Launceston Sewerage Improvement Project is set to be one of TasWater's largest infrastructure projects. It will address the challenges of ageing infrastructure, increased environmental standards and population growth and aims to deliver a financially, environmentally and socially sustainable sewerage system for the greater Launceston community and generations to come. This Project is of a scale that requires Federal Government support in order to be fully realised. LGAT joins with TasWater in seeking State Government support in lobbying the Federal Government for funding assistance for this Project. Importantly, Federal Government assistance will mean that a number of the other TasWater projects can proceed within acceptable timeframes.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Local Government is responsible for billions of dollars worth of community infrastructure, excluding local roads. Growth in demand for Local Government services has increased rapidly during the past decade. In addition, Local Government plays an important role in meeting new and unprecedented challenges affecting all Australians, such as the impact of population ageing and associated health care needs, disease and obesity, environmental protection and climate change. In addition to the increasing community demand for services, Local Government must devote a growing level of its resources to maintain its ageing local community assets.

Well-located, well-designed and properly maintained community infrastructure helps produce better quality outcomes for Australian communities as well as facilitating greater social inclusion. It also helps achieve other important social and regional policy outcomes, including attraction and retention of skilled workers, preventative health, social cohesion and tolerance, building social capital and enabling broad-based education and learning.

Tasmanian Local Government seeks the support of the State in the lead up to the next Federal election in relation to securing funds to address the issue of aging community infrastructure.

Further, there are some council owned or managed assets that have a broader, state-wide significance and should be collectively supported and addressed. In particular we seek investment by State Government to address the waste tyre storage legacy at Longford as well as support to ensure the Copping C-Cell development proceeds, providing a modern Tasmanian based land fill for controlled waste.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Maintain the current State road maintenance funding levels and ensure appropriate funding to upgrade State roads, particularly those linked to popular tourist routes.**
- **Support and work with Local Government on the development and implementation of a regionally integrated freight and transport strategy.**
- **Clarification of the uncertainty around future ownership, maintenance and upkeep of former Forestry Tasmania roads (now managed by Parks) through the audit of roads being undertaken by Infrastructure Tasmania, without significant new and unfunded infrastructure burden placed with Local Government.**
- **Support Local Government to address the infrastructure upgrades and replacements identified the recently completed Local Bridge Assessment Project, including joint advocacy to the Federal Government.**
- **Make changes to the water and sewerage regulatory framework (in line with TasWater's submissions) to allow pricing outcomes to be linked to TasWater's long term infrastructure and financial planning.**
- **Support TasWater in lobbying the Federal Government for funding of the Launceston Sewerage Improvement Project.**
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Better Communities

BETTER COMMUNITIES

Local government is the closest level of government to the community and as such it is the best placed to work cooperatively with many of the State Government and non-governmental bodies, whose mission is to work with communities to promote and encourage improved community outcomes across areas such as education, health and well being, ageing and social inclusion.

Education

Local Government realizes that education is a key determinant of people's health and life satisfaction and is critical in ensuring vibrant, resilient communities.

The debate around education in recent years demonstrates the value placed on it by local communities.

Local Government has strongly engaged in this issue. We have delivered resources and programs in partnership with 26TEN and 28 Mayors are now Education Ambassadors.

Tasmanian councils encourage the Government to continue to focus on improving retention rates to year 12, improving completion of the TCE and improving literacy and numeracy outcomes.

It is important for Local Government, and local communities more widely, to be actively involved in decision making and planning for senior secondary schooling and we ask that the Government continue to engage the sector fully in discussions about change at both a local and state-wide level.

Ageing Population

It is anticipated that one third of Tasmania's councils will have one third of their population over the age of 65 years by 2030. There is a need to consider both the impacts and the opportunities from demographic change. LGAT supports continued collaboration across the spheres of Government and the not for profit sector, in the development of Age Friendly communities which foster health, well-being and the participation of people as they age.

Preventative Health

Tasmania faces significant challenges in this area, with the States high levels of chronic disease and smoking, physical inactivity, poor nutrition and obesity. In order to address these challenges and achieve the Government's goal of making Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025, a strategic, targeted and integrated health prevention program is critical.

A strong preventive health system is demonstrated to significantly improve health outcomes. Currently in Tasmania we are focussing our resources on the acute hospital sector, and as a consequence not enough attention is being paid to factors that promote and facilitate wellness and consequently reduce the burden on the acute system.

Over the last decade there has been increasing focus on Local Government as enablers of better health, both through appropriate land use planning and development of infrastructure to encourage activity and in direct service delivery targeting particular aspects of primary and preventative health care. Funding for preventative health care, particularly at the Local Government level tends to be ad-hoc or one off and we

have historically seen good programs falling to the wayside and the reinvention of the wheel because of the absence of a secure, recurrent funding stream. Local Government is ideally suited to partnering on preventative health projects with the best outcomes derived from place based approaches. We would welcome being part of strategic conversations on how best to deliver desired health outcomes for Tasmanians in the future.

Regional and Economic Development

Core aspects of the Tasmanian economy are strong, however there are continuing concerns about the capacity of Tasmania to compete in a globalising marketplace and in a national 'two speed' economy where we are removed from fast growing areas. This challenge is underscored by our economy currently growing at less than half the national rate.

Three issues are dominant in examining how our economy is transforming and how it needs to respond to the changes.

1. Global and national competition for materials, goods, services and skilled persons will increase.
2. The workforce will need to be more adaptable and will need enhanced skills to be competitive.
3. While investment in traditional economic strengths may continue to be strong, this will not necessarily translate into the levels of employment seen in the past. Future jobs growth will most likely be concentrated in the service industries.

Our challenge will be to continue to adapt to the changes that are occurring, cope with the impacts of the changes and where possible anticipate and take advantage of the new emerging economy.

The Role of Local Government Project (Final Report August 2014) identified the facilitation of the economic development of communities as one of eight key roles for Local Government. Councils identified that they want to actively improve their performance in this emerging functional space and that they required more support to build their capability and deliver genuine outcomes in partnership with Industry and the other spheres of Government.

"Councils' ability to deliver and/or support economic development at the local level is essential to revitalise local economies and build more resilient and economically diverse regions. Local Government has a key role to play in initiating, facilitating and supporting local/regional economic development.

Councils fulfil multiple roles in this regard: they are key stakeholders for state and federal government initiatives; they pursue local/regional economic development opportunities, and provide infrastructure and services necessary for the functioning of their communities. Councils are well connected to relevant stakeholders and members of their community and are ideally placed to coordinate and promote economic development activities.

For many councils, economic development is a relatively new role and as these councils have less experience and expertise this is reflected in a lower level of capability. The self-assessment survey revealed that out of the eight roles, this role was perceived as the role least successfully delivered by councils. Across all responses, only 50 per cent reported to be delivering the role well or very well" (Role of Local Government Project Final Report).

The strategic action plan developed by PLGC identifies some priority projects to support the objective of improved economic development investment and outcomes by Local Government. These include:

- Developing an agreement between the Department of State Growth and the local government sector (through LGAT) that identifies how we will work together to enhance the delivery of economic development activities and in doing so, better define the respective roles of State and Local Government.
- Building opportunities to share and aggregate data, monitor risk and understand competitive opportunities.
- Piloting models of collaboration and projects that improve competitiveness, productivity and resilience of local and regional economies.
- Identifying skills gaps and providing access to appropriate training.
- Coordinating export and overseas investment attraction activities.
- Identifying ways to share planning and implementation of major infrastructure projects.
- Mapping State and Local Government land holdings suitable for potential development.

Some of these initiatives can be completed within the existing resources of the Local Government Sector and State Government, but they do need appropriate leadership and commitment to move forward, particularly from the Department of State Growth.

Tourism is recognised by Local Government as a key component of regional economic development. Local Government supports the priorities as outlined in the T21 Strategy.

While there is not a direct statutory role for Local Government related to tourism, increasingly councils are seeing this as a high priority area of business and are becoming more strategic in their considerations of this emerging role. Councils are already working collaboratively with their neighbours, their regions and with other stakeholders in building capability and outcomes in the tourism space. However, we know more can be done.

There will be a role for State Government, LGAT and the regional local government authorities in going forward related to improving collaboration and strategies; developing private investment opportunities; assisting with marketing and events development; education and training and appropriate funding. A key focus will be on ensuring tourism is a sustainable industry limiting the negative social and environmental impacts.

As the Western Australian Local Government Association states, *to make the most of its potential, managing the challenges in the dynamic context in which tourism exists is imperative. This can only happen with true collaboration between all spheres of government, industry, stakeholders and the community – a sentiment mentioned very often and much less often followed through. It takes planning, time and dedication towards a common purpose.*

The council funded Regional Local Government Authorities are ideally placed to support both State and Local Government in meeting common objectives around regional economic development and tourism.

The value proposition that Local Government provides includes:

- **Advocacy:** As a democratically elected level of government, Local Government can readily connect to State and Federal governments to advocate on priority issues.
- **Regulatory:** Local Government performs a critical role in planning for prosperous and sustainable futures for our community. As the key land use planning authority, Local Government can work with major participants to coordinate the regulatory response to development proposals.
- **Infrastructure:** As a major provider of community infrastructure, Local Government is ideally positioned to advocate, collaborate or partner with major participants to deliver key strategic infrastructure required to enable major economic activity to proceed. This may involve 'joined-up' government responses from federal, state and local government in partnership with major developers.

While councils are very effective at working for the regional development of their jurisdiction, it is recognised that:

- Their view of regional development is almost inevitably limited to their own boundaries and they may struggle with broader regional issues;
- They may have limited linkages into state and federal government programs and activities, thereby limiting their role as facilitators of economic development: and
- The performance of, and commitment to, regional development varies significantly between councils. While some are very effective in promoting growth, others place their priorities elsewhere and their lesser performance may affect the development of the region as a whole.

It is recognised that effective regional development is most likely to be successful through a combination of approaches and organisations. Local Government has a role in delivering assistance and expediting the development process within their boundaries. However, their activities will be most effective when placed within the context of a truly regional approach to economic development; one that straddles Local Government boundaries and is seen to be free of the political tensions that can surround the sector.

It is recognised that regional initiatives are seen to be more effective than smaller scale Local Government-based development efforts because:

- A single voice (or united voices) representing a significant region is more likely to be listened to by federal government and private sector decision makers than a number of competing voices from individual communities;
- A united approach could also work to reduce parochialism and petty rivalry between communities and the region as a whole is seen to benefit;
- It would reduce competition between councils in a region;
- Significant regions are of sufficient size to genuinely achieve economies of scale in their operations;
- They are able to genuinely address regional issues such as infrastructure provision and adequacy; and
- They reflect the value that the Australian and Tasmanian Governments place in regions. This is reflected in their preference in dealing with regional consortia in developing the economic and social

future of Australia, and notably the Australian Government's desire for a regional approach in assessing projects for funding.

Regional development organisations are advantaged over state-based approaches because:

- They can more effectively carve out a presence for the region in the global marketplace in a way that would be difficult for government departments, which are required to treat all regions equally;
- They result in greater local ownership, support and control as opposed to state-based initiatives;
- They are often perceived to be more flexible and responsive in dealing with the private sector, and;
- They are often considered to be highly effective in mobilising local businesses, entrepreneurs and private sector resources in working for the growth of the region.

A regional strategic direction is necessary to guide regional economic development because:

- It demonstrates that local government is an important partner in shaping Tasmania's future;
- It establishes a clear pathway for communication to central government, resulting in a stronger advocacy role at both the State and Federal level on priorities;
- The absence of a regional framework may operate as a disincentive for private sector investment, and;
- It facilitates and coordinates the work of other agencies committed to economic development, such as local government and branch offices of the State Government departments.

LGAT and the three regional authorities have started reviewing the current contexts and frameworks which we respectively work within and mapping opportunities to reduce duplication and deliver improved outcomes and value for the entire Local Government Sector.

As we map the future role for the Regional Bodies, particularly as relate to economic development, tourism and supporting efficient and effective Local Government within regions, we encourage the State Government to also be actively involved in the dialogue and to work with the Local Government sector in developing collective and collaborative approaches to meeting common goals.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Continued investment in improved educational completion and attainment.**
- **Communication and collaboration, with Local Government, on education reform activities at a local and state-wide level.**
- **Support for collaborative building of Age Friendly Cities.**
- **Immediate development of the five year strategic plan for Preventative Health in Tasmania, accompanied by an increase in the preventive health budget**
- **Progression of projects identified in the Role of Local Government Project Strategic Action plan which support improved economic development outcomes.**
- **Improved collaboration in relation to tourism strategies; developing private investment opportunities; assisting with marketing and events development; education and training and appropriate funding.**
- **Involvement in mapping and supporting the ongoing role for Local Government's regional authorities as relate to economic development and tourism.**

STATEMENT FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA (TASMANIA)

Local Government Professionals Australia (Tasmania) (formerly Local Government Managers Australia (TAS)) provides leadership and advocacy, professional development and fellowship and services for Local Government professionals in Tasmania. Local Government Professionals (Tasmania) and LGAT have a strong history of collaboration and just this year formalized that through the signing of a MOU.

Local Government Professionals Tasmania support LGAT's advocacy and identified priorities for the 2016-17 State Budget.

Additionally we note the importance of continued investment in the Local Government workforce both in relation to attracting and retaining skilled staff and in ensuring that Local Government professionals have the skills needed to address emerging roles and functions. Working with LGAT, we will continue to seek to ensure quality data for workforce planning, appropriate benchmarking of performance, assistance in addressing capability gaps and appropriate advocacy and advice regarding the role of officers in Local Government.

We have welcomed the regular dialogue with the Minister and engagement with the Local Government division on improvement projects and seek that that continues going forward.

STATEMENT FROM THE SOUTHERN TASMANIAN COUNCILS AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION

The Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority (STCA) is the regional Authority representing the 12 southern councils. Together the councils' come together through the STCA to work cooperatively and identify regionally beneficial projects.

PLANNING REFORM

In recent years the STCA has been an active participant in the different planning reform processes. We remain committed to working with the State Government to deliver the best planning outcomes for local communities.

- It is important the State Government and the Planning Reform Taskforce continues to closely engage with local government through the development of the Single Statewide Planning Scheme.
- There needs to be appropriate resourcing and assistance to local government for the implementation of the Single Statewide Planning Scheme
- Local Government input into the development and implementation of the state planning policies
- We want to play an active role working with the State Government on the resources and the review of the Southern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy

The Single Statewide Planning Scheme is due to begin in 2017. The STCA believes the success of this piece of planning reform is dependent upon the full rollout and implementation of IPlan.

A fully resourced and implemented IPlan is critical in making the Single Statewide Planning Scheme user friendly as well as delivering efficiency benefits through the online DA lodgement and tracking process and the enquiry search function

- The STCA strongly supports the resourcing of the full rollout and implementation of IPlan

TRANSPORT/INFRASTRUCTURE

The STCA has long been a strong advocate for increased funding and improved transport infrastructure in Southern Tasmania. This is vitally important as our population and economy continue to grow. We look forward to continuing to work cooperatively and in collaboration with all tiers of government to improve our region's transport system.

In particular, we need an integrated transport network that supports the mobility of people and freight across the region.

We have a number of key regional priorities, these include:

- **New Bridgewater Bridge** – This is a longstanding key project for the Authority and represents a key transit route for passengers and freight on the national highway
- **Sealing of the Highland Lakes Road** – This project will seal the final stage of the road allowing it to act as a key tourist route connecting the Highland Lakes to the West Coast
- **Upgrade of the Airport Roundabout** – With the large increase in vehicles expected on the roundabout in the coming years this is a critical infrastructure upgrade to alleviate a potential bottleneck and ensure efficient traffic flows in and out of the airport
- **Channel Highway re-direction at Huonville** – A re-routing of the Channel Highway at Huonville would create better traffic flows in the main street and also open up the foreshore for economic development and recreation opportunities. It would also improve road safety for motorists and pedestrians
- **Development of a greater Hobart Transport Plan** – This is a critical piece of infrastructure planning work to understand the traffic flows and movements across the three major road corridors into and around greater Hobart

REGIONAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Increasingly the STCA is looking to play an active role in facilitating regional and economic development in Southern Tasmania. By investing in regional development projects we help build vibrant and strong local communities. Projects that support this goal also help drive economic development which delivers growth and employment opportunities, benefitting the whole community. Some crucial regional and economic development priorities include:

- **Promoting regional dispersal of tourists** – With the increasing number of tourists visiting Tasmania it is important strategies and programs are put in place to encourage the dispersal of these visitors to regional Tasmania. It is also vital that appropriate investment is made in tourism infrastructure to support this visitor growth.
- **Construction of the Copping C Cell** – Tasmania is the only State in Australia without a C Cell facility, its construction would open up economic development opportunities in the Antarctic sector, the heavy industries and with the remediation of Macquarie Point. It would also deliver better environmental outcomes through the disposal of legacy waste
- **Securing more defence manufacturing contracts** – Despite our strong capabilities Tasmania's maritime industries still struggle to obtain defence contracting work, it is vital we are recognised as a defence manufacturing precinct to give us a better opportunity to tender and secure this work
- **Continued upgrade and restoration of Willow Court** – This is a key heritage icon of Tasmania, it is important that heritage restoration works continue on site. A redeveloped Willow Court presents strong regional and economic development opportunities to take place on site through retail space, food and beverage offerings, special events and functions

STATEMENT FROM THE NORTHERN TASMANIAN DEVELOPMENT

Northern Tasmania Development (NTD) is the regional development organisation for North and North East Tasmania. Its purpose is to advance the interests and development of the region by facilitating and coordinating worthy economic and community initiatives. NTD is an incorporated association, established by the eight Councils of Northern Tasmania.

Core business for NTD is:

- intelligence, planning and research to support economic development opportunities;
- economic and skills development initiatives;
- investment attraction for projects of regional significance;
- maximising Commonwealth and State funding for the Region.

NTD is leading the development of a collaborative strategic direction for the North: The Regional Futures Plan.

This direction has been developed in consultation with over 200 industry, business, community and government representatives.

Through these discussions, their message is clear: Northern Tasmania can and will take charge of its future.

The Regional Futures Plan is a framework for regional leaders to determine and advocate for the game-changing projects required to grow the Northern Tasmanian economy.

By 2025, the Regional Futures Plan will:

1. Reduce unemployment and increase workforce participation to higher than the national average, creating 8,000 new jobs.
2. Stimulate economic activity, increasing Gross Regional Product by 5% pa from \$6.1bn to \$10bn.
3. Lift living standards by increasing average income to higher than the state average, meaning \$100 extra in the pocket each week.

NTD encourages the Government to recognise:

- The Regional Futures Plan as a partnership between industry, community and Local Government;
- The goodwill, momentum and commitment between these partners to the Regional Futures Plan;
- Alignment of the Regional Futures Plan to key Government economic, industry and population platforms, and;
- The value of the Regional Futures Plan in growing Tasmania's economy and jobs.

STATEMENT FROM THE CRADLE COAST AUTHORITY

The Cradle Coast Authority was established by the nine North West Tasmanian Councils to:

1. provide leadership for the Cradle Coast Region and Councils
2. promote and achieve economic development (including tourism development) for the Cradle Coast Region
3. act as advocate and lobbyist for the Cradle Coast Region
4. provide for means of cooperation between the councils

The Cradle Coast Authority in partnership with its Councils and industry stakeholders is developing a Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) that will identify the region's opportunities, gaps and barriers. The REDS will use an evidence based approach to develop a long term vision and strategies to build a sustainable and resilient economy that supports its communities and industries.

Key to the REDS will be developing capacity within Local Government, business and communities to take responsibility for developing and implementing actions at a local level under a shared regional framework.

The Cradle Coast Authority encourages the Government to be a partner in this project that will end the cycle of expecting Government to fix problems but be a partner in delivering solutions in collaboration with the community.

REFORM

Cradle Coast Councils have a long history of collaboration and resource sharing. The Cradle Coast Authority, along with its Councils, is committed to delivering efficient and effective services to the community. The Authority is supporting the Cradle Coast Councils as they engage with the State Government's reform agenda.

PLANNING

Cradle Coast Councils have actively engaged with the State Government's Single Planning Scheme and support the idea that a uniform planning scheme can assist with economic development within and between regions for the betterment of the State economy.

The Cradle Coast Authority encourages the Government to continue with the process of planning reform with investment in developing regional planning strategies that respond to the emerging opportunities.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The maintenance of existing and investment in new infrastructure contributes to building a strong and prosperous economy. The Cradle Coast Authority encourages Government is work collaboratively with Local Government to identifying gaps in infrastructure as well as creating a priority list, based on robust analysis and strategic long-term planning, of regionally-significant infrastructure proposals.

BETTER COMMUNITIES

Cradle Coast Councils have an intimate relationship with their communities and the specific socioeconomic issues that directly impact their prosperity and livability.

The Cradle Coast Authority encourages the Government to work closely with it and its communities in constructive and inclusive processes which empower the community to take responsibility and control for developing solutions to local issues.