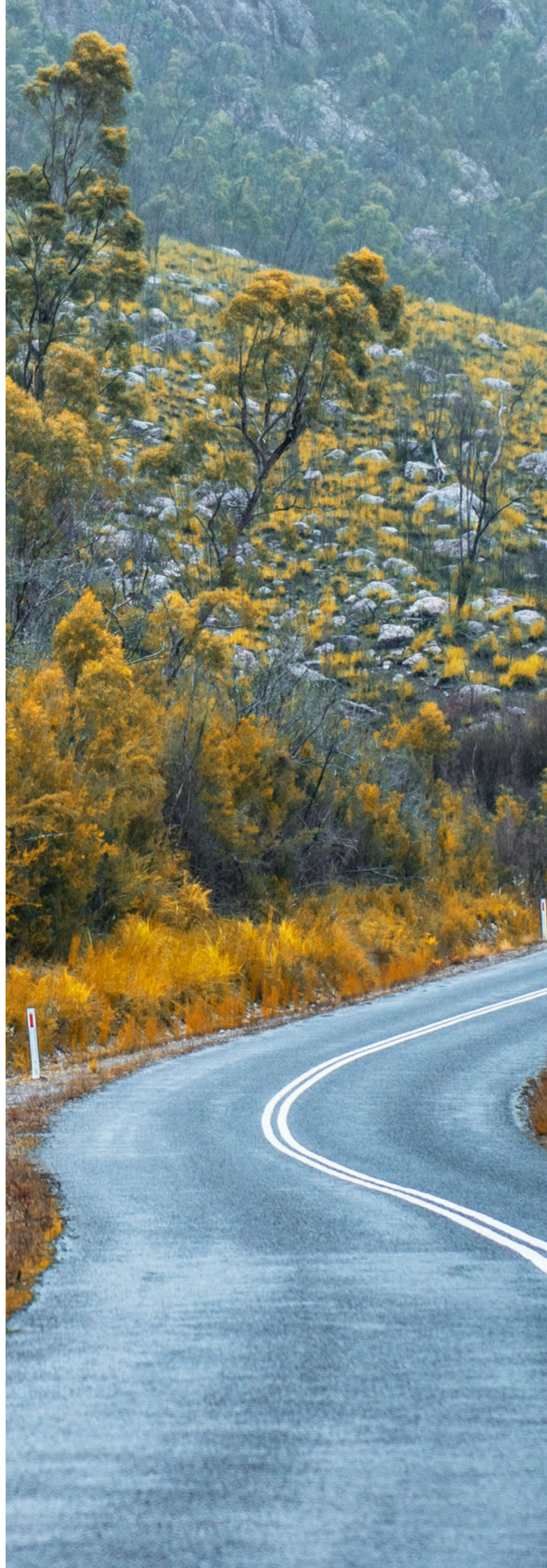


# STATE BUDGET PRIORITY STATEMENT

2024-25



# Local government delivers the services and infrastructure that shape the daily experiences of every Tasmanian.

It is local government that delivers the services and infrastructure that shape the daily experiences of every Tasmanian, and which are a major determinant of our communities' wellbeing. They are place shapers who drive most people's attachment to, and satisfaction with, the area in which they live.

As the closest level of government to the community, councils make decisions daily that influence how local communities are planned and developed.

In representing their communities, councils have 262 elected representatives and undertake their functions and services with close to 4,000 employees.

Due to this connectedness with their communities, local government is best placed to partner with the State Government on building prosperity and enabling improved community outcomes at the local level.



## About Us

Councils are supported in undertaking their diverse roles by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT).

We have been the peak body for local government for over 100 years.

Our role is to support, promote, advocate for, and represent the local government sector so our members are in the best possible position to serve their communities.

All 29 of Tasmania's councils are members.

We work collaboratively with our members to support councils and the communities they serve and represent.

To support the State Government in improving community outcomes, the local government sector is seeking the following targeted investments.



# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The strength of local government is in its elected representatives coming directly from within the community. They bring diverse skills and experience and a passion to make things better for their local areas.

To make sure that councillors build their skills and expertise in local government, in line with good governance principles and legislative responsibilities, it is critical that they are supported to undertake ongoing learning and development. This means that better decisions will be made, and that councils are able to fully partner with the Tasmanian Government in delivering local community wellbeing and prosperity. This perspective has also been noted by the Future of Local Government Review, responding to feedback from within the local government sector and the community.

We have been progressing this work in collaboration with the Office of Local Government, to develop the Local Government Learning and Development Framework. There has been good progress with the existing resources to articulate the core competencies and understanding that each elected representative needs to have. There is also a strong foundation of online learning packages that can be adapted into other formats.

The critical next step is to extend the learning beyond the online modules into face-to-face training, workshops and experiences. This requires expertise in curating, designing and procuring learning that is appropriate for the range of councillors across the state. Alongside this translation, the existing modules will need to be reviewed and updated. It is important that this work can be done as close to the local government sector as possible to ensure its design and delivery is tailored for elected representatives and their learning and development needs. In parallel with this, is the need to build a culture of continuous development amongst elected representatives.

We propose that the Tasmanian Government provide seed funding to LGAT to maximise the sectors engagement with the existing and future learning and development opportunities. This investment would support a Learning and Development Coordinator to progress development and delivery of learning materials and provide outreach into councils to build the case for council investment.

The investment in local government learning and professional development would be repaid through well-equipped councillors better placed to support the aspirations of our communities and to deliver on their legislated responsibilities.

## Budget request:

\$360,000 over two years to engage a Learning and Development Coordinator and resources for learning event logistics and promotion support.



# PLANNING EFFECTIVENESS

Tasmania's planning system is incomplete. The statewide planning policies are missing, the regional land use strategies are outdated, and there is very little supporting information to assist proponents through the regulatory system. This creates problems right through the system as developers don't have a full and coherent picture of the development outcomes that local communities aspire to.

Without sustained funding by the Tasmanian Government in state-level planning functions and administration these gaps will continue to create problems and the operational needs of our planning system will not be met.



We welcome the Tasmanian Government's investment in the Tasmanian Planning Policies, regional planning coordination and Regional Land Use Strategies. However, the pace of delivery needs to increase, along with support and engagement with planning authorities. This additional investment is needed to complete the job and deliver the critically needed outcomes that LGAT and councils have been calling for.

The Tasmanian Government has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to achieving the objectives of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy and its population goals by investing in accelerating the delivery of its key planning reforms.

Tasmania needs:

1. Tasmanian Planning Policies to be completed to provide state-level guidance to regional and local plan-making.
2. Regional Land Use Strategies to be updated to provide clarity to both local plan-making and developer proposals.
3. A more complete suite of planning information, with useful development design guidelines, process flowcharts and applicant checklists.
4. State Planning Provisions to be reviewed and updated to integrate all the above.
5. Collaborative process improvement work by the Tasmanian Government and local government by working *together* to identify further procedural problems and potential solutions.

Councils have extensive and deep experience with the challenges and gaps within Tasmania's planning framework, yet they have almost no power to do anything about them. There is a clear opportunity to improve our system for the benefit of all. This requires a sufficiently resourced Tasmanian Government planning agency that continues to improve how it listens to, and works closely with, local government to deliver together.

## Budget request:

We request the Tasmanian Government recognise the significance of its role in administering the planning framework and increases funding to State Government planning functions. This capacity must be directed at accelerating the current planning reforms through to completion, and then the maintenance and continual improvement of Tasmania's planning framework in a contemporary manner that understands and is responsive to local government needs.

# CHANGING PLACES

Tasmania is changing. We are seeing strong economic and population growth. Since 2016, Tasmania's population has grown at an unprecedented rate, more than double the highest projections. If we maintain this pace, we will see Tasmania reach its 2050 population target of 650,000 by 2033.

Population growth brings many economic benefits, including an influx of consumer demand and additional workforce requirements. It also brings a range of pressures, particularly on housing and development to meet our growing needs.

Change at the best of times is hard. Rapid change, as we're seeing, is even harder. The community needs to be brought along with the why we need to change how we develop our urban centres. Without this the community pushes back – “not in my backyard”.



Community-level resistance to sensible change makes it incredibly challenging to provide measured, timely development responses to the population growth that underpins our economic prosperity. This is uniquely testing for councillors, who were elected to represent the views of their local communities and at the same time make prudent planning decisions.

We need to speak to communities about the challenges and opportunities that growth brings. An increased understanding and acceptance in the community means that councils can properly undertake their planning and growth management responsibilities.

The Tasmanian Government needs to lead a healthy, honest and positive conversation with communities to allow us to guide the growth we want. This means different sorts of dwellings and development in different communities. It is most definitely not ‘one size fits all’ with medium and high density dwelling everywhere. We need housing that responds to different life stages and different socioeconomic circumstances. In some places, this may look like single storey detached dwellings, in others it may be double storey townhouses, and in others medium density apartments.

We must help our communities understand that we need to do something different if we want to maintain our standard of living and economic prosperity. We need to acknowledge the scale of growth and its impact, and use this to engage the community in shaping the solutions we urgently need. We must build constructive community conversations and responses via a government-led community communication program on these issues. This work is critical to how well the Housing Strategy can deliver for Tasmania.

This approach would need to be in partnership with Tasmanian councils to engage communities in understanding our growth challenges and envisioning a constructive and inclusive future. A well-designed program can focus our community conversations on the future we want to create for our local areas, for future generations, and for people vulnerable to housing insecurity. A focus on the future and on other people can create an empathetic community attitude to our development aspirations.

## Budget request:

We urge the Tasmanian Government to allocate funding to develop and implement a community communication program that encourages a conversation around growth and development in Tasmania.

This would need to engage the full cross-section of the Tasmanian community across traditional and social media.



# INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRIBUTIONS

In Tasmania, developers and councils both face problems with the financing and delivery of infrastructure for development, and in particular, housing. This hinders the state's ability to provide for the population growth we are experiencing.

We lack a cohesive system of identifying the growth infrastructure needs and then equitably distributing the cost of planned infrastructure between development proponents so that the right infrastructure at the right time can be delivered.

This creates a situation where developers avoid infrastructure costs by delaying their development until another developer has constructed the infrastructure that they will rely on. This delays housing development and means that costs aren't equitably distributed between developers. This is known as the first mover problem.

Every other Australian state resolves these problems with infrastructure charging systems that have been steadily refined over years. The charges are clear and certain for developers. They account for incremental consumption of infrastructure network capacity and support better infrastructure planning and delivery.



The need for infrastructure contributions to support development has now been identified by the Draft Tasmanian Planning Policies, the Tasmanian Housing Strategy, and the Future of Local Government Review.

Now is the time to supercharge Tasmania's development with a best practice infrastructure contributions system that's fair for everybody.

## Budget request:

We urge the Tasmanian Government to allocate financial and human resources to develop a robust legislative framework and associated guidelines in partnership with local government.

A best practice infrastructure contributions system would help councils to support development in their municipalities with timely infrastructure delivery and support our quality of life in the face of the impacts of growth.

# CONSUMER INFORMATION ON PROPERTY SALES

Purchasing a home is one of the biggest investments that many people make during their life. To help people make the right decisions they need the right information. Tasmania and the Northern Territory are unique in not requiring that vendors provide full disclosure about the property they are selling.

More information is required on a breakfast cereal packet than a property for sale in Tasmania. This leaves consumers vulnerable to being stuck facing considerable expenses, legal impacts or worse still, environmental hazards such as landslips.

It is time that Tasmania had a modern property disclosure approach. This would make clear the matters that are important to property buyers, such as information and risks with planning, building, plumbing, utilities and natural hazards such as landslip or coastal erosion.

The other states and territories provide a great start for Tasmania to have its own disclosure approach, outlining what is required and how it is to be described. This information is provided to potential buyers along with the contract of sale making all information equally available to the market.

## Budget request:

We urge the Tasmanian Government to invest in developing and implementing a mandatory property disclosure system.



# PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE RESOURCING

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) provides essential functions – managing over 50 per cent of Tasmania’s land area, a natural resource that is one of the state’s key tourist assets. They also provide critical property services in permitting access to Crown land through licensing, leases and landowner consent.

Local economies depend upon well maintained parks assets to provide sustainable visitation that is the lifeblood of many communities around the state.

PWS has over \$1 billion in assets to manage including 1,152 km of roads, 16 visitor centres, 664 vehicle and pedestrian bridges. Their investment in managing the parks estate is around \$16/hectare, compared with the national average of \$26/hectare. Parks are to be commended on how well they manage their assets with this level of funding. However, there are gaps that are impacting local economies and visitor perception that they are unable to currently address.



PWS’s other key role is to represent the Crown to manage the use and development of its land and property. Councils have frequent interaction with this area in their role as the Planning Authority. Councils, and importantly proponents, have experienced significant delays in getting approvals to access or use land. This assessment can often be complex where PWS must consider a range of legislation

and policies. While we have seen an improvement in processing times with a modest increase in human resourcing, additional investment will support Tasmania’s goals to support sustainable, appropriate development.

## Budget request:

We urge the Tasmanian Government to increase the budget allocation for PWS to manage the parks estate, bringing it closer towards the national average of investment per hectare, and to earmark a funding increase for the Property Services division to employ additional staff.