



Joint Select Committee on Preventative Health

Submission

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17 August 2015

Introduction

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT/The Association) is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body for Local Government in Tasmania.

The objectives of the Association are:-

- To promote the efficient administration and operation of Local Government in the State of Tasmania;
- To watch over and protect the interests, rights and privileges of municipal Councils in the State of Tasmania;
- To foster and promote relationships between Local Government in the State of Tasmania with both the Government of Tasmania and the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia;
- To represent the interests of the members of the Association generally, and in such particular matters as may be referred to the Association by its members; and
- To provide such support services to the members of the Association as the Association may by resolution in meeting determine.

Opening Comments

“Local Government performs a wide range of roles within Tasmania many of which are driven by statutory or regulatory requirements and others which are more discretionary and have evolved out of councils’ unique relationships with their local communities. The way councils deliver these roles differs from council to council depending on aspects like size, geography, culture, demographics and community involvement. Councils also have different ways of perceiving their overarching role.”¹

There are few better demonstrations of this statement than the involvement of Tasmanian councils in preventative health care. As well as the broadly-stated power in section 20 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, to “provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community”, councils have significant statutory and regulatory responsibilities in areas which impact on health. These include building and plumbing control, waste removal, immunisation programs, communicable disease control and environmental health activities such as food safety and air quality. How councils exercise their responsibilities in relation to strategic planning and land use planning also has an impact on positive health outcomes.

In terms of the more ‘discretionary’ aspect of the role of councils, there is considerable variance in the level of involvement of councils and the type of services and activities they deliver, in the area of preventative health care. This was clearly demonstrated in the 2011 Heart Foundation Review of Local Government Health Promotion Initiatives, which surveyed councils (25 of whom responded) to identify general health promotion, physical activity and healthy and safe food initiatives.

¹ Page 17 Local Government Role Assessment Final Report

The 2011 Heart Foundation Review also asked respondents to the survey how they saw the role of Local Government in health promotion. The responses at that time indicated, that whilst the majority felt health promotion and the provision of environments supporting healthy lifestyles were important, there was far less agreement on whether implementing health promotion initiatives of their own or for other levels of governments was the core business of councils.

The Role of Local Government Project

The Role of Local Government Project (the Project) is a collaborative project between the Tasmanian Government and Local Government which was established by the Premier's Local Government Council in 2012. In the intervening period there has been extensive engagement with state government agencies, councils, Local Government experts, academics, the private sector and the wider community, asking three questions:

1. What are Local Government's roles and what should it be delivering to its communities?
2. Where the blockages and capability gaps which impeded councils being able to deliver these roles?
3. How do we work together to remove blockages and address the gaps?

In the initial stages of the Project, a collaborative process between the Tasmanian Government and Local Government established the eight roles of Local Government:

Sense of Place

Councils facilitate and work with their communities to develop a sense of place through branding, promoting and enhancing local identity, and promoting social cohesion and health and wellbeing.

Community Engagement

Councils engage with their communities, sharing information about community, council and government business, and where appropriate, provide opportunities for constituents to influence and/or participate in council decision making.

Strategic Leadership

Councils provide strategic leadership through understanding current and future operating environments, identifying opportunities and risks and making decisions which align with long-term strategic plans and corporate plans.

Land Use Planning

Councils are strategic land-use planners who work with communities to create an environment that guides the use of land to balance economic, environmental and community/social values, and to support the health and wellbeing of their communities.

Economic Development

Councils facilitate the economic development of communities by working with the business community to attract and retain investment and support sustainable economic growth.

Services and Assets

Councils are responsible financial managers who deliver cost effective, equitable and efficient services and assets which reflect local needs and expectations and are guided by council's long-term corporate planning objectives.

Legislation and by-laws

Councils enforce relevant state and national legislation and create by-laws and policies as required to support the efficient and effective functioning of council to support the community.

Representation and Cooperation

Councils engage with each other and other spheres of government to represent and advocate the needs of their communities, and where appropriate, cooperate and work in partnership to generate the greatest benefit for communities.

(An analysis of the roles, breaking them down into their key components, is shown at Appendix 1)

Of the eight roles of Local Government identified and analysed through the Project, it is 'Sense of Place' and 'Land Use Planning' that have the most direct relevance on the subject matter of this Joint Select Committee Inquiry, although of course how councils perform all of the other six roles will have an impact.

Sense of Place

*"Sense of Place requires councils to work with their communities, to plan strategically across environmental, social and economic issues with the aim of creating liveable and cohesive communities."*²

In the discussion of this role in the Local Government Roles Assessment Interim Report, it was noted that the focus of Local Government in recent years has shifted from delivering services to properties to delivering services to people.

*"This shift is evident in Tasmania with most councils playing a more significant role in supporting community recreational and cultural needs. Councils are increasingly providing services, facilities and programs that support community capacity building and which promote a sense of place and health and well being."*³

² Page 12 Local Government Role Assessment Interim Report

³ Page 15 Local Government Role Assessment Interim Report

“Many councils have taken a leadership role in this area and are delivering a broad range of health and well-being related services to their communities. Councils did point out that they are often challenged by the health and well-being role of other levels of government, ad-hoc, poorly coordinated and one-off funding for initiatives and duplication of effort.”⁴

The submission from Population Health, Department of Health and Human Services noted that the traditional role of councils in delivering health protection activities has expanded to include health promotion, with many councils involved in the delivery and /or support for health and well-being activities and programs. This submission also recognised the challenges faced by councils in delivering these programs without appropriately trained staff.

One of the key findings in relation to this role was that there are opportunities for councils to play a greater role in supporting the health and wellbeing of communities by assisting in the coordination of activities with key stakeholders and actively supporting local initiatives.

Land Use Planning

Much of the analysis of this role related to the implementation of statutory planning responsibilities but there was a recognition that a significant part of planning is establishing a strategic long-term vision as well as short-term to long-term planning priorities.

More specifically in relation to this Inquiry, it was noted that “land use planning plays an important role in creating public and private spaces to support the health and well being of local communities”.⁵

The Heart Foundation’s 2011 Report Review of Local Government Health Promotion Initiatives in Tasmania found that there was a consistently high level of council initiatives in place or being developed to provide infrastructure and environments to support and promote physical activities.

A number of councils use the Heart Foundation publication ‘Healthy by Design’ to assist their work in this area.

Role of Local Government Project Strategic Action Plan

In December 2013, four working groups were established to develop a range of short and long-term strategies and actions to remove impediments and build Local Government capacity in priority areas:

- Governance
- Legislation
- Collaboration
- Economic Development,

with a view to presenting a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) at the December 2014 PLGC meeting.

⁴ Page 17 Local Government Role Assessment Report

⁵ Page 18 Local Government Role Assessment Report

The SAP identified as a high priority project the establishment of Statements of Intent between LGAT and State Government in relation to key regulatory requirements which would provide for:

- Clear role delineation, guidance and assistance to councils in undertaking their roles;
- A dedicated and ongoing forum for strategic consultation with councils and other stakeholders; and
- Joint development of tools and systematic review.

Such an arrangement has been developed with Public Health, DHHS and will leverage off the proposed Local Government Portal (DHHS) and the EPA network to support policy, advocacy and regulatory activity. Land Use Planning and Environment were also identified as areas suitable for such an arrangement to be put in place.

Although the suggested work program for the Collaboration Working Group included the task to 'develop flexible models to support councils to act as the central coordinating focus for a range of health and wellbeing activities', this has not emerged as a priority in the SAP.

How Councils have an impact on health and well being outcomes

Many councils are involved in non-regulatory activities that have preventative health outcomes. As mentioned in 'Sense of Place', many councils have plans, programs and activities in place that have an impact on health and well-being outcomes.

Council Plans

Most councils identify the health and well being of their communities in their strategic plans. This is often expressed in terms such as 'promoting', 'encouraging' 'supporting' and 'enhancing'. Apart from fulfilling their legislative public health responsibilities, the strategies identified largely relate to enabling physical activity. In relation to health services, councils describe their roles more in terms such as 'lobbyist', 'facilitator' and 'advocate'.

Many also have in place community, health and well-being, positive aging, access, liveability and social inclusion plans or strategies.

Appendix 2 gives some examples of these plans.

Council programs and activities

Councils across Tasmania offer a very wide range of programs and activities that have preventative health outcomes.

Some of these have direct, often with a statutory basis:

- Food safety, including registration and inspection of food premises, promotion of food safety and food handler training.
- Immunisation programs.
- Registration and inspection of health risk premises eg tattoo studios.
- Provision of 'no smoking' areas.

- Investigation of environmental nuisance complaints e.g. air, noise, water pollution.
- Water testing of recreational water and public swimming pools.
- Drink driving interventions.
- Exercise and fitness programs.

Other programs have more indirect preventative health outcomes:

- Parks and playgrounds.
- Walking and bike tracks.
- Swimming pools.
- Mens' sheds.
- Community gardens, food and cooking security programs.
- Healthy workplace programs.

These are developed, through the strategic planning process, to suit the needs of each community, so will vary from council to council to meet different community objectives. Very often they are run in conjunction with community groups or in collaboration with other government sectors, NGOs or private organisations.

Some examples of these programs can also be found in Appendix 2.

Social Determinants of Health and Health Risk Factors (SDH & HRF) project

LGAT has been undertaking a project with Primary Health Tasmania to build Local Government understanding of the social determinants of health and enhance councils' capacity to strategically plan to improve health outcomes within their communities.

The project is funded through the Australian Government's department of Health 'Social Determinants of Health and Health Risk Factors (SDH & HRF) Project'.

The project objectives are:

- a) to raise Local Government awareness of community issues and impacts relating to the social determinants of health;
- b) to build the capacity of Local Government to plan and respond in a strategic manner to achieve improvement in community health outcomes;
- c) to provide tools, guidelines and other resources and facilitate the sharing of local skills, knowledge and information to build sector capacity.

The project has three components: forums, a training and grants program and the provision of tools and resources.

Forums

Two forums were held for Council officers to provide learning in the following areas:

- Social Determinants of Health and Health Equity
- The role of Planning in developing healthy communities

- Achieving improvements in community health and wellbeing through a Community development approach
- Food Security and enabling access to local healthy food
- Capitalising on community strengths and Community Asset Mapping
- Tools for Local Government
- Local and interstate case studies
- Knowledge sharing and networking opportunities

The third forum, targeting Council Managers and Elected Members combined a presentation on "Local Government as a change agent - with a focus on the social determinates of health, how can Councils work with their communities to improve health outcomes" followed by a workshop on "Increasing the capability of Local Governments and Regional Authorities to act as facilitators and leaders to build strong regional food economies that support community level food security".

Grants/Training Program

The project has funded a combination of training session or small grants to build staff capacity and understanding around the social determinates of health or undertake strategic planning activities focusing on achieving council lead/supported improvements in community health outcomes.

Promotion and distribution of resources/tools

The project has assisted the distribution of a number of resources available to help councils strategically address community health outcomes:

- electronic planning resource *Healthy Communities – a local government toolkit for building healthier Tasmanian communities*
- Meander Valley Council's Community Development Framework - *Not a spectator Sport*.

Councils have also been involved in a number of other initiatives under SDH & HRF project, including:

- 12 social determinants of health projects addressing education retention and engagement, food security and service collaboration and integration in 10 Local Government areas
- capacity building training and support in eight communities administering major SDoH projects focusing on:
 - project governance, strategic planning, budgeting and training and mentoring
 - project evaluation and effective report writing
 - collaboration and collective impact.
- broadly focused *Bridges Out of Poverty* training in three regional areas aimed understanding the cultural issues impacting on poverty (950 participants)
- a range of food security projects funded through Primary Health Tasmania and administered by the Heart Foundation.

Close

Councils are delivering an increasing range of social services and community infrastructure to address the needs of their communities as well as playing a greater role in shaping the economic and cultural fabric of communities. The Commonwealth Grants Commission provides the following explanation for increased functions:

- **Devolution:** where Australian or state/territory governments require local government to take responsibility for services.
- **Raising the bar:** where the complexity/standard of a local government services is increased by other tiers of government.
- **Cost shifting:** is the withdrawal of federal/state funding support to local government to provide a service previously provided by another level of government, or where local government steps in to provide a service withdrawn from another tier of government.
- **Increased community expectations:** where the community demands improvements in existing local government services.
- **Policy choice:** is where councils voluntarily choose to expand their service provision.

In the context of financial sustainability and pressure to keep rates down, some councils will find it difficult to take on non-statutory roles.

This dilemma is well illustrated in the provision of non-statutory preventative health care services and programs. It can be argued that Local Government is the closest level of government to the people and is uniquely placed with its knowledge of, and interaction with, the community to deliver such services. However, it is not unanimously accepted that this is the core business of councils, particularly in smaller councils. There is concern at the financial implications when, after receiving one-off or short term funding, there is an expectation for council to maintain programs. There is also concern about the staffing implications both in terms of capacity and workload.

For councils overall to feel more accepting about participating in this area, far greater clarity on long-term resourcing will be required.

Appendix 1

Key Components of the Roles of Local Government

Sense of Place

Councils facilitate and work with their communities to develop a sense of place through branding, promoting and enhancing local identity, and promoting social cohesion and health and wellbeing.

Role Components

- Councils promote and support community leadership.
- Councils provide a central focus and assist communities to define and build a sense of place.
- Councils foster civic pride and 'sense of place' through communications, the delivery of community assets and support for community activities. Councils use effective engagement strategies to understand the needs of communities and include their needs/views in strategic planning and the delivery of services.
- Councils seek opportunities to promote local identity, and community and natural assets within their Local Government area and with external organisations.
- Councils facilitate or deliver community development programs that build empowered and resilient communities.

Community Engagement

Councils engage with their communities, sharing information about community, council and government business, and where appropriate, provide opportunities for constituents to influence and/or participate in council decision making.

Role Components

- Councils commit to engage with community to understand the characteristics, needs and aspirations of their communities using multiple data sources and information gathered from their communities using best engagement methods.
- Councils keep the local community informed of their business and activities through appropriate and readily accessible communication mechanisms.
- Councils develop and implement systems and processes to seek the views of communities; and process, analyse, understand, respect and apply information gathered through consultations.
- Councils stimulate and support community involvement through providing access to councillors and appropriate mechanisms for participation and providing opportunities for participative decision making.
- Councils engage broadly to understand the local, regional, statewide, national and international context in which they operate

Strategic Leadership

Councils provide strategic leadership through understanding current and future operating environments, identifying opportunities and risks and making decisions which align with long-term strategic plans and corporate plans.

Role Components

- Councils monitor and address the current and future needs, challenges and opportunities of the community in the context of the local, regional, state, national and international environment.
- Councils create long-term strategic and corporate plans which are achievable and measurable, and monitor and report progress against plans.
- Councils use strategic and asset plans as the basis of responsible revenue raising decisions, ensuring rates reflect annual costs of service delivery and long-term infrastructure needs.
- Councils manage finances, service delivery and assets to meet the needs of communities and ensure long-term financial sustainability for future generations.
- Councils strategically plan for infrastructure investment using cash reserves and/or debt responsibly.

- Councils articulate evidence-based priorities and develop partnerships with community and government to achieve those priorities.
- Councils provide leadership and are prepared to effectively manage emergency and disaster events and their long term impacts.

Land Use Planning

Councils are strategic land use planners who work with communities to create an environment that guides the use of land to balance economic, environmental and community/social values, and to support the health and wellbeing of their communities.

Role Components

- Councils understand the environmental, social and economic potential of land within their municipal area and across the regional catchment, and incorporate that knowledge into their decision making.
- Councils work with communities to generate local and regional strategic plans that maximise the sustainable public and private return from land use.
- Councils work with stakeholders and communities to ensure plans are understood and can be efficiently translated in the use and development of applications.
- Councils assess development and use applications against the appropriate planning instruments.
- Councils monitor and enforce compliance with land-use and development conditions.
- Where appropriate, councils cooperate with each other and adopt a regional perspective in land-use planning.
- Councils consider climate change and other environmental impacts in their planning and decision making.

Economic Development

Councils facilitate the economic development of communities by working with the business community to attract and retain investment and support sustainable economic growth.

Role Components

- Councils have a constructive working relationship with businesses locally and within the region and are accessible to and proactively assist potential new businesses.
- Councils support local economic strengths and promote economic diversity while taking into account the characteristics of the community.
- Councils account for the external environment in planning and adapt plans to support local economic viability within the context and vision and sense of place desired by the wider community.
- Councils monitor and understand the economic drivers for local or regional communities as well as the vulnerabilities and opportunities within communities.
- Councils establish strategic alliances and relationships with existing or potential businesses or markets and effectively and effectively utilise regional groupings of councils for leverage.
- Councils enable the business sector, and support regional and/or state government initiatives which will broaden their economic base and lead to future growth and prosperity.
- Councils engage with key partners in business and government who influence economic prosperity through planning and investment.

Service Delivery and asset management

Councils are responsible financial managers who deliver cost effective, equitable and efficient services and assets which reflect local needs and expectations and are guided by council's long-term corporate planning objectives.

Role Components

- Councils provide assets and services to an agreed level determined in consultation the community while meeting relevant standards and statutory requirements.
- Councils implement contemporary, long-term financial and asset management systems to ensure assets are maintained in a condition that meets the identified needs of the community.

- Councils have access to resources to ensure the efficient maintenance and replacement of assets and the efficient delivery of services.
- Councils' strategic community plans are integrated with both short- and long-term financial, social and asset management plans.
- Councils conduct regular service reviews to ensure services meet community needs and are financially sustainable and adjust service levels where appropriate.
- Councils provide meaningful reports on financial performance including service delivery and asset management performance to the community.

Legislation and by-laws

Councils enforce relevant state and national legislation and create by-laws and policies as required to support the efficient and effective functioning of council to support the community.

Role Components

- Councils enforce relevant state and national legislation efficiently and effectively within the local area.
- Councils provide feedback to government regarding the efficacy and cost impacts of implementing legislation.
- Councils create by-laws that meet the needs of the community and environment in the local area.
- Councils develop, implement and regularly review meaningful policies as required to support the objectives of the council and the community.

Representation and cooperation

Councils engage with each other and other spheres of government to represent and advocate the needs of their communities, and where appropriate, cooperate and work in partnership to generate the greatest benefit for communities.

Role Components

- Councils engage with other governments to gather information, provide information, and explore and pursue opportunities.
- Councils coordinate activities with other governments through participating effectively in reforms, taking advantage of opportunities offered by other governments and working in partnership with other governments.
- Councils contribute at the local level to the achievement of national, state and regional policy goals.
- Councils develop a clear evidence base of regional strategic priorities which are advocated to government with a unity of purpose.
- Councils maximise opportunities for resource sharing and joint procurement to reduce costs and improve efficiencies and effectiveness of services.

Appendix 2

Examples of Councils' plans and activities with preventative health outcomes

Council Plans

Glenorchy City Council - Healthy Communities Plan

The Glenorchy Healthy Communities Plan 2014-2024 has three goals:

- 1: A natural and built environment that encourages active lifestyles and healthy eating
- 2: A cohesive and inclusive community with well-developed social and community networks and assets, and
- 3: Improved personal health knowledge, practices, and lifestyles

http://www.gcc.tas.gov.au/content/Healthy_Communities_Plan.GCC?ActiveID=1403

Clarence City Council - Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2018

<http://www.ccc.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1716>

West Tamar Council – Positive ageing strategy

http://www.wtc.tas.gov.au/documents/WTC_Positive_Ageing_Strategy_2011-2015.pdf

Hobart City Council – Social Inclusion Strategy

http://www.hobartcity.com.au/Community/Social_Inclusion

Programs and Activities

Cradle Coast Healthy Communities Project

This project was funded by Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing under the National Partnership on Preventive Health (NPAPH).

On behalf of the nine councils of North West Tasmania, the Cradle Coast Authority coordinated a range of health and wellbeing projects covering health service systems, infrastructure and lifestyle programs.

The Healthy Communities Initiative helped increase the Cradle Coast community's participation in healthy eating practices and lifestyles; improving the wellbeing of residents at risk of chronic disease.

The project also developed a toolkit containing a suite of strategic, annual planning and analysis resources designed to assist local councils in creating environments that support active and healthy lifestyles.

http://www.cradlecoast.com/healthy_communities_toolkit.html

Glenorchy City Council – Glenorchy on the Go

This program was also funded under the Australian Governments national partnership agreement on preventive health.

The project aimed to provide free physical activity and healthy lifestyle programs and activities for people who are not in the fulltime workforce and who would like to improve their health or become more active.

Kentish Council Walkers and Talkers

This program encourages mothers with young children to take a walk together, learn about health and wellbeing for themselves and their children and make new connections in the community.

Healthy Workplaces Program

At least nine councils are participating in this program delivered by Worksafe Tasmania, which includes promoting healthy eating to their workforces and achieving recommended levels of physical activity. A simple guide including lots of practical suggestions plus hands on support is available for councils.

http://worksafe.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/252390/Your_Simple_Guide_to_Workplace_Health_and_Wellbeing.pdf?sm_au=iVVVJZM5ps44W7T5

Devonport Food Connections Project

This project (funded by Primary Health Tasmania) is being led lead by Devonport City Council in partnership with the local Community Houses and a network of service providers. Currently they are mapping indicators of health and wellbeing, the economic environment, the natural environment, the social environment and the built environment that enable or create a barrier to food security for local residents.

Mersey Leven Food Hub

This project (funded by the Heart Foundation) is a partnership between four Local Governments (Central Coast, Devonport, Latrobe and Kentish) and other key partners (organisations and individuals). It aims to create a 'hub' model that strengthens the connection between local growers/producers and retail opportunities to increase access to affordable locally grown fruit and vegetables. The project includes developing and strengthening strategic relationships and the use of online information systems.

Kingborough Food Chain

This project (funded by the Heart Foundation) aims to increase community access to locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables.