

3 April 2020

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via website: <https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm>

Dear Prime Minister

Commonwealth Government's JobKeeper Payments Initiative

The Tasmanian Local Government sector is extremely grateful for your strong stewardship of our country during this difficult time and highly supportive of your recent announcement on the introduction of the JobKeeper Payments initiative.

The introduction of this unprecedented wage subsidy will help ensure that business owners stay connected with their employees while they go into hibernation. This will enable businesses to quickly re-open once we emerge on the other side of this crisis, which will provide immense support to the Australian economy as it attempts to get back on track.

So that the intent of the JobKeeper Payments initiative is realised, and so that all Australians are treated equitably, it is vital that Tasmanian Councils are eligible to receive payments. Many Local Government employees have been directly impacted by mandatory facility closures, including those who work in Local Government owned sport and recreational facilities, tourism and cultural institutions such as museums and markets, tourism facilities including visitor centres and regional airports, child care centres and parking operations.

Concerns that Local Governments are not eligible under the already announced eligibility criteria are due to:

1. Local Government entities not being specifically listed as eligible organisations; and
2. Local Governments not being able to demonstrate a 30% reduction in their total revenue base across their operations, despite the revenue for facilities that have been forced to close being reduced to nil in many instances.

Many of our small rural regional councils have limited cash reserved to draw upon in a scenario where in addition to keeping on essential staff, they are experiencing reduced revenue, rates arrears and are being asked to provide significant rates relief. Councils are a significant employer in Tasmania, with over 4000 staff statewide, and they are often the main employer in our smaller communities, in addition to being the main source of information for worried community members.

The Local Government Association Tasmania (LGAT) requests that in drafting the legislation for the JobKeeper Payments, the Commonwealth Government urgently address the above two points. By failing to do so, the entitlements available to Local Government employees who work in facilities that have been forced to close, will be less than those who work in comparative workplaces. In addition, Local Governments will be placed under considerable financial stress as they attempt to maintain their current levels of employment, while also providing financial relief and economic support to their communities during this crisis. Additionally, it will mean that it will be difficult for councils to gear up quickly as we enter the recovery phase, in undertaking economic stimulus projects and reconnecting communities. Keeping a full complement of Local Government staff is also vital in supporting communities who will, over the rest of this year, be hit with additional burdens such as natural disasters.

Tasmanian councils recognise they have a key role to play, and anticipate being required to shoulder some financial burden along with State and Federal Government, but alone cannot guarantee continuity of employment and essential services.

We seek your commitment to ensuring access for the Local Government Workforce to the JobKeeper Program.

The Local Government Association of Tasmania is working with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to collate data on likely impacts for councils but should you wish any further information or case studies we would be only too happy to provide that in support of your decision making.

If you would like to speak on this matter further, please contact Dr Katrena Stephenson, LGAT CEO on 0488610341 or email katrena.stephenson@lgat.tas.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Mayor Christina Holmdahl
PRESIDENT