



YEAR IN REVIEW 2021-2022



We exist to serve every one of Tasmania's 29 councils and work collaboratively with our members to support them, and the communities they represent.

Our vision

To build stronger councils.

Our mission

To provide leadership, support, representation and advocacy on behalf of Tasmanian councils.

Our values

Strategic, effective, respected, acting with integrity, supportive, collaborative and dynamic.

About us

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) was established in 1911 to represent the interests of local government in Tasmania.

The functions of the Association are to:

- Protect and represent the interests and rights of councils in Tasmania.
- Promote an efficient and effective system of local government in Tasmania.
- Provide services to member councils, councillors and employees of councils.

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

Celebrating the past year.

There has been a lot happening over the past 12 months for our sector.

We welcomed two new Ministers, a Premier, had a Federal Election, the Future of Local Government Review is now in full swing and the Government introduced compulsory voting for this year's local government elections.

The introduction of compulsory voting came as a surprise for all of us. However, the sector has previously considered compulsory voting for local government elections in 2013, 2015 and 2016. While it was not supported, it was defeated by the margin of one council in 2016.

While it is too early to understand the impact of this change fully, there has been a significant increase in voter turnout, rising from 58.72% in 2018 to 84.79% this year. It is pleasing to see more of the community becoming engaged in deciding our sector's leaders.

Following the elections, we're excited to see a diverse range of people representing their communities on council. On behalf of the sector, I welcome the newly elected representatives and congratulate you on being chosen

by your community to serve. Those new to the sector will certainly have their work cut out for them, learning about the role as a councillor, while at the same time participating in planning for the sector's future in the Future of Local Government Review.

The review, which has been running for just short of 12 months is at a critical stage, with the Local Government Board soon to release a series of reform options for feedback. We know from other states that successful local government reviews are community-led, seeking to understand each community's challenges and strengths to identify the right services for them now and into the future.

I am looking forward to the release of the options paper and I encourage you all to engage with the next stages of the review, as we know that one size does not fit all. Local governments operate within increasingly diverse social, economic and environmental contexts. The challenges they face are many and varied, as are their individual circumstances. Appropriate reform and structural solutions will therefore differ considerably between municipalities.

LGAT has done a significant amount of work to support the sector through the previous stages of the review. This work will continue throughout 2023, so keep an eye out for our next stages of engagement.

Over the past 12 months we have also secured some solid wins on behalf of the sector across two of our most significant advocacy priority areas – waste and planning. In addition, LGAT Procurement has continued to expand its benefits, with savings for councils continuing to increase alongside increased procurement support via training and advice from the LGAT team. You can read more about these achievements and many more later in this report.

Looking to the year ahead, all of us have a lot to deal with. Unfortunately, we have experienced a level of turmoil throughout the election campaign that I haven't seen in my time as a councillor. The behaviour of some candidates has dominated the media commentary on the elections. And while this is limited to a small number of high profile issues, it has been accompanied by major changes in how many in our community are engaging with councillors, whether that be via online abuse, or in some instances, unabashed aggressive behaviour at council meetings.

LGAT is aware of these issues and we are doing our best to support elected representatives and councils. Implementation of the recommendations from the recently completed workplace health and safety review of elected representatives will form a key priority for us next year.

The last 12 months have been very significant and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on LGAT's General Management Committee for their hard work and support. In particular I would like to thank the outgoing members who have retired after significant service to their communities – Mayor Annette Rockcliffe from Devonport City Council and Mayor Alex Green from Southern Midlands Council.

I wish you all the best for the year ahead.



Mayor Christina Holmdahl
PRESIDENT

Our focus on the year ahead.

We have another big year ahead of us in local government in Tasmania, and we look forward to continuing our work in supporting councils with your important role as the level of government closest to the community.

One of LGAT's key priorities for the year ahead is the Future of Local Government Review, which is now entering its most important stage of developing and consulting on reform options. There is no doubt the review will result in some opportunities for our sector. We hope to welcome them, provided the changes recognise what councils are delivering well the challenges they face, and result in a more robust and capable system of local government in Tasmania.

With many new elected representatives joining the sector following the local government elections we are expanding our offerings across sector support. This will include formal sessions like the recent induction workshops and other professional development opportunities, but also just being available to the sector for assistance. In addition, we are increasing our collaboration with members on our highly successful LGAT Procurement program, so we can deliver best practice services and products that provide value for councils.

In the past few years Tasmania's population growth across urban and regional areas has exceeded predictions. The Tasmanian brand is strong and more people want to come to our state to enjoy what it has to offer. Local government is central to ensuring that our quality of life is maintained and are essential partners of the Tasmanian Government. This partnership ensures that our communities are desirable with appealing built and natural environments that are supported by hard and soft infrastructure.

To make sure that Tasmania can achieve liveable and prosperous communities, we will continue and strengthen our advocacy to State and Federal Government's for the policy settings and funding to support councils, so our communities are ready for growth. This will be across areas such as strategic land use planning, housing, infrastructure contributions, equitable road funding and consistent development standards.

Of course these priorities are just one aspect of the work our team delivers for the sector.

As your Association, we will continue to speak as a strong, united voice on the sector's behalf to the State Government on a range of important topics. This ongoing advocacy work remains a priority for us.

In closing, I warmly welcome the newly elected representatives, and those returning, and congratulate you on being elected to serve your community on council. It is a big responsibility and I am sure you will all discharge it with the highest levels of integrity.



Dion Lester

Dion Lester

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



2.

General Management Committee

The General Management Committee (GMC) has eight members who provide oversight of LGAT operations. The GMC is elected by councils every two years and it comprises the popularly elected President, the Lord Mayor and six other members elected by regional groupings of councils. The GMC elects the Vice President.

THANK YOU

We thank the recently retired members Alex Green and Annette Rockliff for their valuable contributions to LGAT and their respective councils. The North West Regions vacancy will soon be filled via a by-election.

Mayor Christina Holmdahl,
President from July 2019
Elected to GMC July 2015

Mayor Mick Tucker,
Vice President
Northern Region
Elected as Vice President
June 2021
Elected to GMC July 2017

Mayor Peter Freshney
North West Region
Elected to GMC June 2021

Mayor Danny Gibson
Northern Region
Elected to GMC June 2021

Mayor Kelly Spaulding
Southern Region
Elected as GMC Proxy June 2021

Mayor Bec Thomas
Southern Region
Elected to GMC June 2021

Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds
City of Hobart
As of right position, July 2019

Strategic Priorities

Our Strategic Plan outlines the strategic outcomes we will focus on over the next three years to meet the needs of our member councils. It contains strategies across our functional areas of advocacy, sector services and governance and operations.

1. ADVOCACY

To protect and represent the interests and rights of councils.

2. SECTOR SERVICES

To provide services to member councils that promote an efficient and effective system of local government in Tasmania.

3. GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

We will embed agile and efficient governance and operations to enable the Association to provide value to members.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2021-22

Our advocacy priorities during the past 12 months have been local government reform, waste and resource recovery, planning, climate change, emergency management and health and wellbeing.

While the focus within sector services has been ongoing professional development opportunities, the local government elections and the development of a multi-year plan for LGAT Procurement to enable growth in the resources, services and advice that assist councils.

We continued to modernise our internal systems alongside fostering a work environment that is rewarding and supports our values to ensure timely and high-quality member services.

The Future of Local Government Review

At the beginning of 2022 the Tasmanian Government commissioned the Local Government Board to review local government in Tasmania.

Members may recall that in October last year the Government abandoned the process outlined in the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council Final Report, instead electing to work directly with LGAT on scoping and undertaking the review. The LGAT GMC spent the next two months working with the then Minister on the terms of reference and scope of the review. We had significant input into the final make up of the Local Government Board and were successful in securing funding from the Government for a Policy Officer to support our work on the review.

To support the sector through stage one, we coordinated and delivered a range of engagement opportunities, which included 14 regional workshops and forums, an online survey and also a conversation tool kit. This work captured the experiences, ideas and aspirations of council-elected representatives and staff for the future of local government.

The first review stage concluded in July 2022. As we progress through stage two, we will complement and extend the Local Government Board's council engagement to ensure that the process is robust and councils can have their say. One example of this is the advocacy success we had in securing an extension of stage 2 through to March 2023 to give our sector and the community sufficient time to engage with this critical stage of the review. [You can find out more here.](#)

Code of Conduct Review

Improvements to the Code of Conduct is a continuing priority for us and the sector.

Tasmanian councillors on the whole, work hard and demonstrate mutual respect and a genuine desire to meet community needs to the best of their ability. We need to remember that councillors are human beings who, no matter how much they try, will make occasional mistakes. The Code of Conduct should be reserved for matters of a more serious nature pertaining to breaches of governance standards, serious cultural issues, or loss of public confidence in local government.

This is where the Code is failing us. We have a system that spends unnecessary time and resources on dealing with the trivial, while on the occasions when serious misconduct occurs, it fails to adequately sanction the breaches.

The Government's review has been progressing following our advocacy and input on behalf of local government. The release of the draft *Local Government Amendment (Code of Conduct) Bill 2022* was a welcome development in a long process.

While the Bill addressed many of the sectors concerns, we continue to advocate for further changes to strengthen the Code. To support the necessary improvements, we secured funding from the State Government to undertake a review of the workplace health and safety for elected representatives.

This body of work has recently been completed, with the implementation of the recommendations forming a significant priority for us next year.

We speak as a **strong, united voice** on the sector's behalf

Emergency management

Emergency management continues to be a key focus given councils' essential role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

We urged the State Government to invest in councils' capability and capacity and the ongoing issues with social and regional recovery arrangements through [various submissions](#), including the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements (TEMA) Review and the Emergency Management Act Review.

The Fire Services Act Review, underway for several years, is progressing slowly. We continue to reiterate the need for councils to see improvements with real options for them to consider.

[You can find out more here.](#)

Waste and Resource Recovery

Waste and resource recovery has been a sustained area of our advocacy over several years.

Indeed, many broader stakeholders' credit LGAT with driving the current agenda adopted by the State Government.

The last 12 months has seen the State Government introduce legislation for a statewide waste levy and also a Container Refund Scheme. In both instances the pathway the Government is following is strongly aligned with our advocacy. Nevertheless, we continue to scrutinize the details to ensure the implementation does not disadvantage councils.

Passing the *Waste and Resource Recovery Act 2022* was a significant achievement, and we have worked with the Government to ensure effective engagement and support of local government. In addition, the inaugural Waste and Resource Recovery Board has been appointed. The LGAT nominee is supported by other members with strong local government experience. The Board will oversee the investment of landfill levy funds guided by the waste and resource recovery strategy they are currently preparing. [You can find out more here.](#)





Climate change

This year we held our inaugural Climate Change Conference.

The conference was held in May 2022 at the Launceston Conference Centre and over 70 attendees turned out to hear from key speakers Anton Voss (ReCFIT), Amanda McKenzie (Climate Council), Charlotte Turner (MinterEllison) and Professor Gretta Pecl (UTAS).

Each speaker shared insights into their work on tackling climate change and what councils can do to help. The day broke off into two streams on emissions reduction and climate adaptation/risk management, and councils shared what they are doing to mitigate climate change in their areas. This included introducing electric vehicles to the fleet, using hydrogen in Tasmania, coastal climate issues affecting the Northwest and specific case studies.

In addition, throughout the year we collaborated with the State Government on opportunities to reduce emissions and tackle climate risk, incorporating these in the Tasmanian Climate Action Plan. Our advocacy for changes to the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* resulted in a better reflection of local government's role through recent amendments to the Act.

Planning

We've continued our strong advocacy to the State Government to progress the planning reform agenda.

We have focused on the need to address the strategic level of the planning system, particularly the Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) and the critically needed update to the three Regional Land Use Strategies (RLUS).

The RLUS are crucial for unlocking land supply for development, particularly housing. Our public advocacy led to the State Government allocating resources and beginning work on updating the RLUS.

The State Government also listened to our TPPs [submission](#) by integrating several of our points into their draft policies. They have made efforts to embed climate change action, address growth pressures, housing and settlement planning, support quality design standards and support our state's growth with infrastructure contributions.

Although this is a good start, more needs to be done and we look forward to the Government committing to support local government planning with the strategic guidance that the system needs.

Infrastructure

We have been working for a better system for local government infrastructure contributions.

This work included presenting at the 2021 Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia Tasmania State Conference and publishing a [discussion paper](#) on how other states handle contributions and the opportunities for Tasmania.

In addition, across a number of multi-stakeholder forums, we've promoted the need for adequate infrastructure contributions to activate development, particularly around housing.

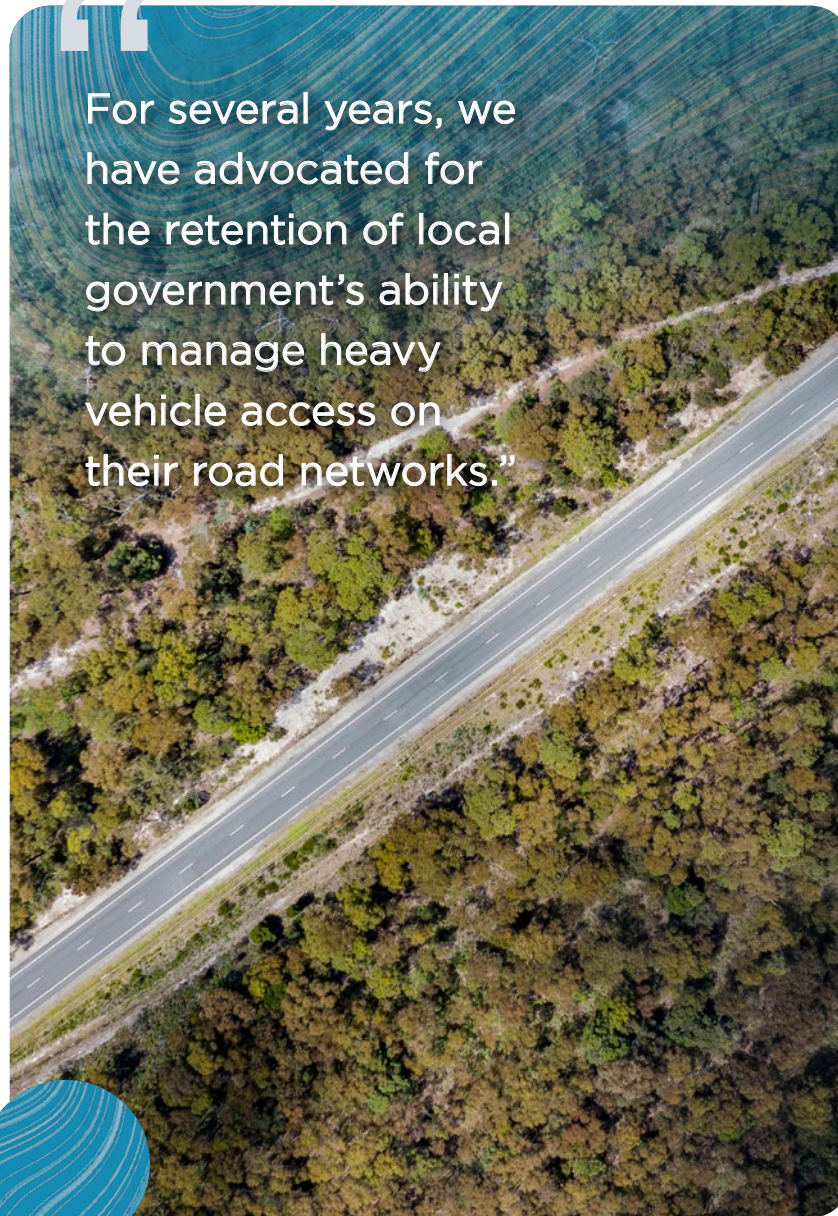
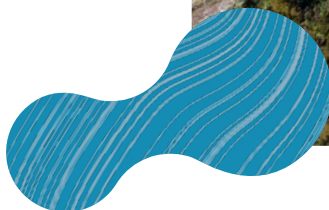
We collaborated with Brighton, Clarence, Hobart, Launceston, NRM North and the Derwent Estuary Program to support councils in regulating stormwater development. This work was recently recognised with the Excellence in Asset Management, Innovation or Sustainability Award. A wonderful example of what can be achieved when the technical experts at council work together, supported by peak bodies, for the benefit of communities around the state.

This work included LGAT-commissioned advice on existing council powers ([available on our members' only portal](#)) and the publication of the [Tasmanian Stormwater Policy Guidance and Standards for Development](#).

This year our focus has been on supporting and advancing Tasmania's nation-leading heavy vehicle access arrangements through the Department of State Growth's Heavy Vehicle Access Management System ([HVAMS](#)).

The system helps councils by supporting their understanding of their road structures, like bridges and minimising the permit processing load for safe and responsible heavy vehicle road access. This advocacy has resulted in national work and projects supporting Tasmania's approach, particularly the [Austroads project NEF6393](#) - Implementation Project Contemporary Heavy Vehicle Access Decision Making for Road Managers.

“For several years, we have advocated for the retention of local government's ability to manage heavy vehicle access on their road networks.”



Housing

While present around the country, the housing crisis is being felt acutely in many parts of Tasmania, creating significant social and economic impacts for many in our community.

We are actively participating in the State Government's work to address the housing challenges that we are facing by highlighting the issues that councils are seeing in their municipalities. We have strongly advocated for a holistic approach that supports appropriate growth, including measures such as infrastructure charges and building stakeholder understanding of where the bottlenecks in supply lie.

On behalf of the sector we have participated in the Minister's Housing Reference Group, the Housing Strategy Expert Panel and direct discussions with key State Government agencies.

Health and wellbeing

The Local Government Health and Wellbeing Project, funded by the Public Health Service, has enabled us to promote the many diverse ways councils enhance community health and wellbeing.

We commissioned UTAS to look at the health and wellbeing workforce needs and produced the report, [Building Capacity for Health and Wellbeing Promotion in Tasmania: A Workforce Development Strategy for Local Government](#). This work provides a valuable resource to support our advocacy on workforce needs and the importance and value of local government's practical contributions to improving community health and wellbeing outcomes across Tasmania.

Our collaboration with the Public Health Service and advocacy to the State Government more broadly has stimulated widespread recognition of the essential and unique role that councils play in supporting community health and wellbeing.

This advocacy work has contributed to recognition in the [Healthy Tasmania Five Year Plan 2022-2026](#) of the essential partnership role local government plays as the sphere of government most closely linked to peoples wellbeing. The Future of Local Government Review has also recognised the vital role that councils play in supporting the wellbeing of their communities.



3.

Federal Election

Through a range of public relations activities, we supported the national campaign of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) for the federal election held in May.

The advocacy was successful, with the Labor Government committing to:

- A \$750 million Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program extension to support councils to build new community centres, sporting facilities and playgrounds.
- \$200 million annual Disaster Ready Fund that helps protect high-risk communities from fires, cyclones and floods.
- Restoring local government on National Cabinet, with ALGA now included at one meeting a year and membership on the Council on Federal Financial Relations.
- Committing to providing fair increases to Financial Assistance Grants, which currently sit at 0.55 per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue, below the 1 per cent sought by our sector. It was last at this level in 1996.

Local government elections

Have a seat at the table campaign

To support this year's local government elections, we ran a public relations campaign to encourage an increase in the number and diversity of candidates across age, gender and the culturally and linguistically diverse.

The campaign ran between 11 July – 14 August and was jointly funded by the Office of Local Government and LGAT, supported by an agency to develop digital assets and social media advertising.

The campaign generated strong levels of awareness, engagement and attracted valuable traditional media, raising the profile of the local government elections and the importance and value of diversity in Tasmanian councils. Across all platforms covered by the campaign, there were a total of almost 500,000 impressions.

In addition to the campaign, a range of digital assets and resources were provided for councils to localise and use, including a handbook, social media tiles, Frequently Asked Questions, Powerpoint slides for community sessions and an 'ask us' function on our website. We also supported councils by presenting at a number of candidate information sessions.



The campaign webpage also encouraged people to undertake the online learning package and development framework for people interested in running for council in Tasmania.

Learning and development framework

To support the new and returning councillors we worked with the Office of Local Government to develop a Local Government Learning and Development Framework that aims to increase the knowledge and skills of councillors.

The framework is informed by our existing resources, a local government reference group and testing by elected representatives. The online modules, support elected representative's understanding of the critical aspects of the role and create a foundation for us to provide additional professional development opportunities throughout 2023 and beyond.

The modules are across three packages:

- **Learning Package 1** – for people interested in running for council, who want to understand what it means to be a councillor and why they should nominate for the elections.
- **Learning Package 2** – provides basic information councillors need to get them through the first few months after they are elected.
- **Learning Package 3** – provides more detailed information for councillors to ensure they can fulfil their role and understand their responsibilities. Access to Learning Package 3 will only be delivered to elected representatives and will be released in 2023.

[You can find out more here.](#)

LGAT Procurement

In the 2021/22 financial year, councils saved more than \$2 million using the LGAT Procurement panels, an increase of 50 per cent on last financial year. The savings equated to more than the total member subscriptions we received.

Council spending through the contracts exceeded \$13 million with the biggest spend being over \$3 million through the heavy plant machinery equipment contract.

Beyond the savings, in the past 12 months we have increased our efforts to support council procurement by delivering 9 training sessions, providing expert procurement advice and establishing a procurement network to support collaboration between council procurement officers.

We have also moved to active arrangements for 15 panels. This means they are tendered more regularly, allowing more local suppliers to participate.

During the year we established a new open spaces, parks, play, sport and recreation panel and facilitated a tender for street lighting energy for the sector.

The energy tender saved participating councils a significant amount, particularly given the energy market volatility.

During this year we also commissioned an independent review of our services to Tasmanian councils. The aim was to identify how to best structure our member service to support Tasmanian councils' current and future needs.

The review identified several initiatives which we plan to deliver in a phased approach over the next five years.

The key initiatives include:

- A training solution to support procurement capability within councils, including the establishment of a procurement knowledge centre for local government.
- Increasing the local suppliers within contracts.
- Establishing a set of Tasmanian specific construction panel contracts.
- Investigating aggregated tenders for specific contracts, similar to our work on street lighting.



- Developing and implementing a sustainable procurement program linked to council strategy.

Consultation with the sector has strongly informed these initiatives, which will ensure greater efficiencies and increased procurement capability and skills within the sector.



Councils saved more than \$2 million using our procurement panels, an increase of 50 per cent since last financial year.”

4. Photo supplied by Burnie City Council.

Events



While the residual effects of COVID continued to impact on our ability to run face to face events, we were able to provide a series of events throughout the year to support and encourage our members' professional development and networking.

In the past 12 months, we have held fourteen events with over 400 attendees. In addition, we ran a series of webinars on various issues for council staff on emerging policy and legislative change. Areas of focus have included asset management, COVID-19, engaging young people with local government and planning.

This year we have introduced an events newsletter so council staff and elected representatives can receive our professional development and networking opportunities straight into their inbox.

Annual Conference 2021

The Annual Conference is our premiere event and a key professional development and networking opportunity for local government leaders.

The 'local solutions for local communities' themed conference was held on 5 and 6 August 2021 at the Wrest Point Casino in Hobart. This event was again, a paired-back version due to COVID-19 restrictions which impacted several speakers, sponsors and attendees who could not attend in person due to the lockdown measures interstate and overseas.

Despite this, the event was attended by 126 elected members, general managers, executives and other staff. Feedback showed that 82 per cent of delegates rated the conference as either very good or outstanding.





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6. Photo supplied by City of Launceston.
7. Photo supplied by Brighton Council.