Local Government Association Tasmania

Our Ref: JS | LO'L

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Small Business Strategy
Business Tasmania
Lodged online

Dear Business Tasmania team

Submission on the Consultation Draft of Tasmania's Small Business Strategy 2036

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the consultation draft of Tasmania's Small Business Strategy 2036. This submission has been prepared by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) on behalf of all 29 Tasmanian councils.

LGAT is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body and advocate for local government in Tasmania. Where a council has made a direct submission to this process, any omission of specific comments made by that council in this submission should not be viewed as lack of support by the LGAT for that specific issue.

Please contact Jon Stanger if you have any questions or would like further information, at jon.stanger@lgat.tas.gov.au or 0437 374 125.

Yours sincerely,

Dion Lester
Chief Executive Officer

LGAT Submission: Consultation Draft of Tasmania's Small Business Strategy 2036

Introduction

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation draft of Tasmania's Small Business Strategy 2036 (the Strategy). We understand that the Strategy's objective is to create the conditions for Tasmanian small businesses to succeed through a long-term focus on resilience, collaboration, innovation, and adaptability.

We support the Strategy's broad direction and its recognition that small businesses are central to Tasmania's economy, regional communities, local wellbeing, and long-term prosperity. Small businesses are often deeply embedded in the places where they operate, and their success is linked to local infrastructure, services, housing, transport, community resilience, and liveability, areas in which local government plays a major role in supporting.

Tasmania's Small Business Strategy 2036 should recognise that small businesses will thrive when local government and the communities we support and represent are also thriving.

Local government as a delivery partner

Tasmanian councils are important place-based economic development partners. Across the state, councils contribute to local business success through:

- economic development, investment attraction and business support services
- assisting businesses to navigate planning, development and regulatory processes
- strategic planning and development assessment
- local infrastructure and asset delivery, maintenance and management
- tourism and destination development
- events, place activation and community grant programs
- community facilities and services
- local procurement and supplier development initiatives
- emergency management and disaster recovery
- initiatives that support regional liveability and workforce attraction.

Some councils employ dedicated economic development staff who work directly with businesses, investors and industry groups to encourage investment, support business growth, facilitate approvals processes and strengthen local economic opportunities.

We recommend that the final Strategy and future Implementation Plans more explicitly recognise local government as a strategic delivery partner.

While councils are referenced in limited areas such as local purchasing and digital connectivity, there is an opportunity to more clearly articulate the role of local government in achieving the Strategy's objectives.

Where implementation actions arising from the final Strategy rely on local government participation, these actions should be developed in consultation with councils and LGAT, identify clear responsibilities and recognise the capacity and resourcing constraints facing the sector.

Networking and collaboration

Councils often act as local convenors, bringing together businesses, industry groups, community organisations and government agencies. The Strategy should recognise this local government work and further resource and support councils to undertake place-based leadership, local events, business engagement activities and regional partnerships that strengthen the collaboration underpinning resilient local economies.

Business advice and support

Several councils provide business advice and support services, and we welcome the Strategy recognising that trusted, accessible and responsive services are essential. The Strategy should acknowledge existing services and build on a model that reaches businesses where they are, delivering local knowledge and easy access through local delivery.

Local purchasing and procurement

We support the Strategy's focus on strengthening local purchasing and procurement. The draft appropriately recognises the role that all levels of government can play in improving visibility of procurement opportunities and supporting local suppliers.

Councils already make a substantial contribution to local economies through procurement, supplier engagement and support for local businesses. LGAT's procurement team supports local government procurement processes, builds capability and connects local businesses with opportunities across local government.

LGAT recommends that any future actions arising from the Strategy relating to local purchasing:

- Builds on the success of LGAT Procurement in developing procurement capabilities.
- Recognises councils' obligations regarding probity, transparency and value for money.
- Remains flexible enough to reflect local market conditions.
- Focuses on practical tools, guidance, capability building and supplier development.
- Avoids creating additional unfunded administrative requirements.

Regional liveability, workforce and housing

We strongly support the objective of attracting and supporting people to live and work in Tasmania. At the same time, we recommend that the Strategy also explicitly recognise the importance of retaining current residents to support their local communities and economies. The Strategy correctly identifies the importance of housing, transport, skills development, workforce participation and community infrastructure in supporting business growth, particularly in regional areas.

These issues are consistently raised by councils across Tasmania and should be addressed holistically in partnership with local government.

Tasmanian brand

Councils play an important role in shaping and promoting the places, experiences and communities that underpin Tasmania's reputation and competitive advantages. We support activating these strategic assets and recommend that the Strategy recognise and support local government's role in tourism, place-making, support for culture, heritage and events, stewardship of public spaces and community infrastructure, environmental management, and liveability.

Environment, climate and renewable energy

We support the Strategy's recognition of climate resilience, environmental sustainability and renewable energy as essential to long-term business success. Tasmanian councils, supported by LGAT, are increasingly leading local climate adaptation, disaster resilience, renewable energy facilitation, sustainability initiatives, resource recovery, waste management and circular economy programs. The Strategy should recognise these initiatives and local government leadership, with actions that build on existing efforts and support partnerships between local business, councils and regional bodies.

Technology and digital connectivity and capability

We welcome a continued focus on digital connectivity and capability and acknowledge its importance for business productivity, market diversification, export opportunities, tourism, emergency communications, access to services and remote work. The draft correctly identifies that reliable digital infrastructure remains a challenge, particularly in regional Tasmania.

We welcome the recommendation that local government be included in efforts to improve capability, resilience and reach. However, this area is one where councils have the least power and role in delivering. Initiatives in this category remain the responsibility of telecommunications providers and the Tasmanian and Australian governments. Local government can play an important advocacy role, and we would welcome improved coordination and responsiveness from the telecommunications industry and its contractors in installing and maintaining infrastructure investments.

Red tape reduction and regulatory reform

Local government supports efforts to reduce unnecessary red tape and improve service delivery for businesses. However, regulatory reform must recognise that councils operate within statutory frameworks established by State legislation, which they are expected to administer in an increasingly complex regulatory environment with limited resources.

Early engagement with local government is essential to identify and develop priority reforms that can deliver genuine benefits and efficiencies for local businesses. This can avoid the work councils have experienced to date in responding to proposals intended to 'reduce red tape'. A number of these would not only fail to achieve their stated aim but also require significant resources from local government to implement.

Implementation actions for this Strategy should focus on:

- Improved coordination between state agencies.
- Stronger connections between State Government, local government, industry and business.
- Policy and legislative agendas developed in consultation with local government.
- Improved digital systems, data sharing and transparency.
- Streamlined customer pathways and accessible local support services.
- Realistic statutory timeframes and expectations that match the resources available to the relevant authority.

Implementation and governance

The Strategy appropriately identifies implementation as the mechanism for translating long-term objectives into practical action. LGAT particularly supports the commitment to measurable outcomes and progress tracking. Early engagement with local government in the development of implementation plans is essential to ensure opportunities are realised, duplication is minimised, and actions are realistic.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Tasmanian Government to support vibrant, resilient and sustainable local economies across Tasmania.