

## State Budget Priority Statement 2023-24

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) is the peak body for local government. For over 100 years we have supported Tasmanian councils, with all of the state's councils as members.

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

Local government is central to ensuring that Tasmanians quality of life is maintained. Councils are essential partners for the Tasmanian Government to ensure that our communities have the right services to support them.

### **SAFE AND EFFICIENT LOCAL ROADS**

The efficient functioning of Tasmania's economy, and the safety of its users, rests on how well our roads work together as a system. This means the State Government road network that delivers high speed and high capacity arterial roads connects with, and works with the local road network in delivering the critical door-to-door, first and last mile access that completes productive trips. State roads make up around 20 per cent (3,700 km) of the network, with local roads making up the remainder (some 14,400 km). Local roads are critical in that they provide direct road

access for more than 95 per cent of properties.

Councils are the principal partners of the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments in achieving road safety objectives both for infrastructure and for effective local community engagement.

The current Commonwealth and Tasmanian Government funding streams for road safety, such as Blackspot, Vulnerable Road User Program, and Safer Rural Roads Program, address issues on a per-site basis but do not support long-term, collaborative, strategic and network approaches. We recommend that funding models are used to directly support collaboration between road managers for funding decisions, the development of road network safety plans, and multi-year investment with a whole-of-road network view. This requires more and better targeted funding. There are two existing road-user funding sources that would be appropriate for this use, speeding fine revenue and the heavy vehicle motor tax.

Speeding fine revenue is an ideal funding source to reinvest into road safety initiatives as it is directly linked to unsafe driving behaviour, which increases when people drive at unsafe speeds, and decreases as they do the right thing. It also means speeding offenders are paying for initiatives, rather than those who are driving safely.

The heavy vehicle motor tax is charged to heavy vehicle users to recover the higher

costs caused by these vehicles. Local roads have received the same amount, \$1.5 million per year, for the last 25 years, which means that they are proportionally bearing a higher, unaccounted for cost. Councils, with a limited funding stream outside this, are constrained in how they can address safety issues on the many local roads that are used by these essential vehicles.

**Budget request: We request that:**

- **Speeding fine revenue be fully hypothecated into road safety initiatives.**
- **A fairer, proportional share of the State Government heavy vehicle motor tax is allocated for local roads to support better maintenance and safety.**

**An efficient and safe road system helps to ensure that further pressure is not put on the cost of living.**

## **REGIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

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The State Emergency Service (SES) has provided three regional planner roles for the last four years, with funding due to conclude at the end of 2022-23. These positions have provided an integral link between State Government emergency management functions and municipal coordinators.

The regional planner roles have contributed positively towards the

capability of councils in fulfilling their emergency management functions. Regional planners provide valuable continuity, information, and serve as a key contact for the municipal coordinators. This has been particularly valuable as the regional planners have opened communication lines between councils and the SES, Tasmania Police, and Tasmania Fire Service. The regional planners have also supported the development of a shared understanding across council boundaries, which is critical given emergencies are often not confined to one local government area.

Continued State Government investment in the regional planner positions supports the implementation of state legislation at the local level. This responsibility was articulated by a key recommendation from the recent Royal Commission in National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report that emphasised the need for state and territory governments to take responsibility for the capability and capacity of councils in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural disasters.

The regional planner roles are pivotal in connecting and integrating emergency management planning and response at the local, regional and state scale. Without them Tasmania's emergency management capability is severely diminished.

**Budget request: \$390,000 per annum for three SES regional planners embedded into SES's recurrent operating budget. This will improve existing State**

**Government and local government services and processes.**

## **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

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Providing the right services and functions that are efficient and effective requires that the people that are making decisions and the people delivering the services have the right skills and expertise.

Supporting the learning and professional development of elected representatives and key local government officers means that better decisions are made and that local government, in partnership with the State Government, can play its part in supporting health and wellbeing services to vulnerable people.

LGAT has worked closely with the Office of Local Government within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to develop the Local Government Learning and Development Framework. The framework provides councillors with the knowledge and skills to ensure that our elected representatives are best equipped to make appropriate decisions for their communities based on good governance principles. Two online packages have been developed to date, with a third underway that expands on the critical components of good governance. The 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. At the same time the Office of Local Government will need to build its own capacity to engage with, and contribute to developing learning that helps the sector fulfil its legislative obligations.

Alongside this opportunity there is an emerging need within local government for professional development of people that provide community health and wellbeing functions. In 2021 LGAT commissioned work<sup>1</sup> that outlined the start of a competency framework for these functions within local government. Investment in a Learning and Development Coordinator would provide the necessary expertise and resourcing to refine and implement this competency framework and strengthen local government's important contribution to delivering the Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan.

The investment in local government learning and professional development would be repaid through well-equipped councillors and health and wellbeing officers that are better placed to support vulnerable members of the community.

### **Budget request:**

- **\$360,000 over two years to engage a full time Learning and**

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<sup>1</sup> *Building capacity for health and wellbeing promotion in Tasmania: A workforce development strategy for local government*, Hughes, R., available at: [https://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1061264/HWB-Workforce-strategy-final-Oct-1-2021.pdf](https://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1061264/HWB-Workforce-strategy-final-Oct-1-2021.pdf)

**Development Coordinator –  
evenly split across local  
government elected  
representative support and health  
and wellbeing officers.**

**This funding will be complimented by  
additional investment from the Office of  
Local Government to support  
development of learning materials for  
the local government sector.**

## **CONCLUSION**

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The targeted investments outlined in this submission will enhance local government's capacity to maintain an efficient and safe road system, undertake emergency management planning and responses at the local and regional level, enhance the knowledge and skills of elected representatives and strengthen our sectors delivery of community wellbeing.

With a reach of 29 councils across our entire state, individually and collectively these initiatives make a substantial contribution to cost of living pressures and improving government services at the local level. We look forward to progressing local government's 2023-24 State Budget priorities with the Tasmanian Government to achieve these outcome and would welcome the opportunity to provide further information.