

State Budget Priority Statement 2020-21

Local Government delivers the services and infrastructure that shape the daily experiences of every Tasmanian and which are a major determinant of our community members' wellbeing.

Responsible for numerous diverse services and infrastructure, councils are place shapers who drive most people's attachment to, and satisfaction with the area in which they live.

Councils are supported in undertaking their diverse roles by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT). We have been the peak body for Local Government in Tasmania for over 100 years and represent all Tasmanian councils, with 262 elected members and nearly 4000 employees.

Desirable communities typically have appealing built and natural environments, good transport infrastructure, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity and cultural, recreation and entertainment possibilities. As the closest level of government to the community, councils are essential partners to work cooperatively with the State Government in implementing its agenda and in creating these environments.

To support the State Government in improving community outcomes, the Local

Government sector is seeking the following targeted investments.

WASTE

Local Government and the community have been calling for leadership and action on waste for several years. Consequently, we welcomed the release of the draft Waste Action Plan (WAP). While many of the initiatives are supported, the WAP fails to deliver the clarity and leadership required in adopting a Circular Economy.

In Tasmania, there appears to have been limited discussion on what a Circular Economy is, and if a move to a Circular Economy is an approach that would benefit the State. However, the Circular Economy is becoming a mainstream focus for industry development policies in many jurisdictions.

Research and analysis from Australia and overseas have shown that transitioning to a Circular Economy can create jobs and contribute to economic growth¹. Modelling undertaken in NSW² and South Australia³ indicates that material efficiency gains could deliver significant long-term job growth compared to a 'business as usual' scenario. Recognising and responding to this shift is important for Tasmania's national and international competitiveness.

The Government needs to clearly identify its position and commitment regarding the Circular Economy and outline its roadmap for transitioning to this different economic system. The roadmap should consider how

¹ McCarthy, Dellink, and Bibas, *The Macroeconomics of the Circular Economy Transition: A Critical Review of Modelling Approaches*. OECD Environment Working Papers, 2018(130).

² NSW EPA, *Too good to waste - Discussion paper on a circular economy approach for NSW 2018*, NSW Government Sydney.

³ Green Industries SA, *Benefits of a circular economy in South Australia 2017*, Government of South Australia Adelaide.

the economy is currently structured and what policy tools could be used to address priority issues over and above the high-level targets provided in the WAP.

Local Government believes the Circular Economy could bring significant benefits to not only the waste management industry in Tasmania, but also the economy more broadly, but we need a roadmap and organisation to drive it.

The waste and resource recovery industry have a myriad of touchpoints with different agencies and levels of government. Tasmania does not have a single dedicated body with capacity to provide advice on the Circular Economy or statewide waste issues to the Tasmanian Government and which has the resources to deliver statewide programs.

Tasmanian councils have indicated they believe there is significant merit in our sector and the State Government collaborating via a formal partnership to lead engagement with the Circular Economy and resource recovery in this State. The immediate co-investment proposed will enable, via an agreed work plan, the development of the preferred arrangement statewide functions and activities, while also allowing immediate opportunities in the Circular Economy to be progressed.

The opportunities to unlock the value of waste at an industry level are immense but require significant coordination and collaboration at a state-wide level - combined with real on-ground action.

Budget request: That the State Government commit to co-funding the implementation arrangements from July 2020 for the statewide waste management body.

PLANNING

Local Governments make decisions daily that influence how local communities are planned and developed.

For the past few years the State Government and councils have been implementing a significant planning reform agenda in the form of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. The next stages of the Government's agenda include the development of the missing strategic foundations for our planning system; the Tasmanian Planning Policies, the Regional Land Use Strategies and improvements to the residential development standards to accommodate for our growing population.

Councils are responsible for the implementation of the State Government's planning reform 'on the ground' and consequently the Local Government sector's understanding of the necessary frameworks to build strong local character must not be overlooked. It has been well documented that there have been delays with the implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, many of which could have been avoided if there had been earlier engagement with Local Government and greater consideration given to the advice being offered by the sector.

Local Government can provide real value to the next stages of the State Government's planning agenda, but only if engaged early and on-going throughout the process.

Budget request: That the State Government work collaboratively with the Local Government sector to establish effective and implementable strategic planning policy documents. That the State Government continue to ensure the planning reform effort is adequately resourced, including for engagement and communication activities.

SKILLS & TRAINING

Local Government delivers vital local services to communities, facilitating land use planning and development, road maintenance, processing waste, directing stormwater, ensuring public health and wellbeing, and many others. All these services depend on teams of qualified people with specific training and skills to deliver and maintain economic outcomes and quality of life right across the state. However, Tasmanian Councils have been reporting increasing difficulties in recruiting and filling many of the roles. Chief among these critical skills shortages are engineers, planners, environmental health officers (EHOs) and building surveyors, all reported and documented in LGAT's *Local Government Workforce and Future Skills Report Tasmania (2018)*⁴.

These skills shortages are particularly acute in development and infrastructure service delivery (i.e. planning and engineering), where council capacity is critical for supporting local economies. In addition, the record levels of State Government spending on infrastructure competes directly with Local Government in a limited pool of qualified personnel, intensifying the problem in local areas.

LGAT has already begun work on addressing shortages of environmental health officers. We have taken a collaborative approach with key organisations with a stake in environmental health in Tasmania, to properly investigate the root causes of the shortage so they can be addressed with prudent and targeted responses. Bringing key organisations together, including the

Tasmanian Government (the Department of Health and Environment Protection Authority), the training provider (University of Tasmania), the professional association (Environmental Health Australia) and Local Government, allows a more complete understanding of the problem, greater capability to develop and provide solutions, and ultimately better management of the environmental health system in Tasmania.

This project provides a model from which we can address a number of the other critical skills gaps. Local Government's 2018 Skills Report provides the important baseline data on the skills gaps in the sector, with collaboration from the State Government and relevant training and peak bodies we can better understand the key drivers of these shortages and develop effective solutions to address them and maintain local service levels.

Budget request: A commitment to collaboration between key State Government Officers and LGAT, as appropriate, to collectively address the shortage of engineers and planners.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

On the 14 August the Tasmania Statement was signed by the Premier, the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing and the Chair of the Premier's Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council. The Statement recognises the important role of things like education, housing, employment and planning in determining people's health and wellbeing.

The importance of understanding the unique circumstances of our diverse communities is also recognised in the Statement. More so

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<http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/LG>

[%20Workforce%20&%20Future%20Skills%20Report%20Tasmania%20\(Sept%202018%20FINAL\).pdf](#)

than any other tier of government, Local Government has direct and immediate understanding of the communities across Tasmania. With this deep place-based knowledge we also have the infrastructure vital to address some of our long-standing health and wellbeing challenges.

Councils' existing health and wellbeing plans and the practical community-based programs they already provide can play an essential role in helping the State Government to deliver the commitments within the Tasmania Statement.

Further developing capacity across all of government requires the active engagement of Local Government. Alignment and coherence around community health and wellbeing are already explicit in some councils and evident in the daily actions of others. There is a growing interest within councils and across council boundaries in building on the good practice already evident. The Tasmania Statement provides a timely policy framework to grow that good practice and contribute to the health in all policies approach in local communities across Tasmania.

Budget Request: Ongoing collaboration between State and Local Government as part of the Health and Wellbeing Project to continue to build on the good practice already occurring in Local Government.

CONCLUSION

Local Government is the closest level of government to the community and as such it is the best placed to partner with the State Government on building prosperity and enabling improved community outcomes at the local level.

For the 2020 – 21 State Budget, the Local Government sector seeks a range of collaborative activities that will serve the

State well in increasing productivity and securing the wellbeing and viability of all our communities.