

COLLABORATING FOR COMMUNITIES



21/1/2014

2014 State Election Manifesto

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2014 STATE ELECTION MANIFESTO

INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) lobbies and negotiates on behalf of the Tasmanian Local Government sector. We represent 28 of the 29 Tasmanian councils with around 270 elected members, over 4000 employees and half a million constituents. One of the key objectives of LGAT is to foster and promote relationships between Tasmanian Local Government with both the Governments of Tasmania and Australia.

In the lead up to the State Election LGAT and its members wish to outline matters that are of importance to Local Government in Tasmania for all political parties and voters.

Councils perform a wide range of roles within Tasmania – some of which are driven by statutory or regulatory requirements and others which are more discretionary and have evolved out of the unique relationship with its local communities. There are day-to-day services related to waste and recycling, public and environmental health, planning and building, community development, child care, sport and recreation just to name a few. Councils also develop infrastructure such as roads, footpaths and trails and manage stormwater and community infrastructure such as halls and sports facilities. While the traditional roles of councils in relation to Infrastructure and Planning remain important, Local Government services have increased in number and scope with an increasing focus on the delivery of regulatory and support services. Councils are also tackling emerging issues such as climate change and social inclusion.

Councils work hard to deliver services and infrastructure to support a better quality of life for local communities.

The demand for new and increased services to tackle the range of contemporary issues facing communities is felt at all levels of government. Tasmanian councils and the LGAT have a strong history of working collaboratively with the State Government to improve the outcomes for the communities that we both serve.

BARRY EASTHER

LGAT PRESIDENT

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Planning

PLANNING

Local Government plays an important role in land use planning and development approvals systems in all State jurisdictions in Australia. Councils develop strategic plans for the future development of their municipalities, coordinate and provide physical and community infrastructure, use their strategic plans to guide the application of land use and development zones through State planning instruments and administer the planning instruments on a day-to-day basis.

Over the years, community expectations about the objectives of the planning system have grown. Planning is being relied upon more and more as the solution to complex urban and regional issues and these will only be possible with a commitment by the State Government to meaningfully engage with councils.

Councils are widely thought of by the general public as the masters of the planning system, and while they have a variety of responsibilities under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* to assess applications and review and update Planning Schemes, in reality the process is currently driven and governed by the State Government. While the vast majority of development applications in Tasmania are approved efficiently and effectively by councils, the development assessment component of the planning system remains the most confrontational and subject to greatest scrutiny and criticism.

Even in the face of what are sometimes scathing criticisms about planning decisions made by councils, much of which is unfounded, Tasmanian councils have continued their commitment to a more efficient and transparent system.

Progressing Reform

Local Government recognizes there is frustration about how policies and developments that spark public outrage can cause lengthy delays, costly legal battles, negative media and the loss of community faith in the development process. Amending a planning scheme is a lengthy process and councils do not have a mechanism through which planning scheme amendments can be introduced more rapidly to address issues or capitalize on opportunities.

The current State Government has made significant investment in improving the performance of local planning schemes across the state and implementing a regional planning framework across each of the State's three regions. Regional planning provides the mechanism to better co-ordinate regional infrastructure, economic development and tourism projects, and environmental and social interests for the benefit of the region.

Throughout the life of this project there has been a high level of support for the regional planning initiative within Local Government but there has always been concern that the resourcing and timeframes were inadequate to secure and maintain the desired project outcomes, particularly in relation to future reviews and amendments. Our concern about the lack of future governance arrangements has been raised with the Government and the Planning Commission on numerous occasions over a considerable period of time now with no clear resolution. The finalization of the interim planning schemes should remain a priority and further investment must be made in relation to finalizing the state-wide codes. The effectiveness of the interim planning schemes is likely to be compromised because the state-wide codes which overlap them are not yet in place.

Periodic review will require financial support and while it is unlikely that the cost of such mechanisms would be of the order of the present project, it is likely that an inclusive and consultative approach to these types of reviews will not be insubstantial. Where new issues arise that have the ability to improve or complement the planning system but require research or a greater level of analysis, these matters should have the capability of being thoroughly investigated and put into effect.

It is important to ensure that the value of the current planning reform process is maintained and that the efficiency likely to flow through to the economy overall is not lost. We therefore seek a commitment to adequate funding levels to underpin the ongoing integrity of the new planning regime.

At 28, the average number of days to process planning applications was well below the statutory requirement....Fewer than 2 per cent of council decisions were referred to the Resource Management Planning Appeals Tribunal. (Local Government Sustainability Objectives and Indicators Report 2011-12). Tasmania has the second fastest application processing rate in the country (PIA).

While the present suite of planning reforms have brought significant consistency and streamlining to the planning process, it is imperative that future investments in reform targets those matters that provide the best strategic outcomes for the State. The Local Government sector has seen examples of planning policy that have been pursued outside of a strategic framework of priorities, producing adverse and unintended effects. Such outcomes could be minimised through a more considered approach to issues raised by all relevant stakeholders and widespread agreement on which mechanisms would deliver the best outcomes and a focus on those. Local Government genuinely supports the efforts to improve the planning system but the changes need to be orderly, strategic, beneficial and they must take account of all the implications associated with implementation. Intermittent, quick fire, populous initiatives have the capacity to divert attention and resources away from the key improvements necessary.

As part of a strategic review of the planning system the role, functions and processes of the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) should be considered to better enable State Government agencies (or a central agency such as DPAC) to set planning policy direction rather than effectively vesting all decisions with the TPC. This would further reduce the likelihood of policy on the run, ensuring strategic alignment with other significant policies such as those which relate to infrastructure, economic development and tourism.

Further, there is an opportunity to better integrate legislation. For example, subdivision provisions are currently specified in the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act* and should be incorporated in to LUPAA. There could be better integration and consistency between the *Building Act* and LUPAA. For example – a statewide code for contaminated land is under development yet there are already provisions in the *Building Act* which allow Environmental Health Officers to prevent building on contaminated land. Similarly the state-wide bushfire code has some poorly integrated elements and duplication between building and planning.

Finally with regard to reform, there is a need to strongly publicise the successes to date noting that relative to other States, processing of developed applications is a ‘great news story’. We have the second fastest processing times and the lowest development fees.

Infrastructure Funding and Provision

Where there is significant growth there is also the challenge of delivering and maintaining infrastructure to support it. Current arrangements require councils, developers, Government Agencies and other enterprises (eg water and sewerage, electricity) to enter into ad-hoc negotiations about the provision and ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure which supports development.

There is significant confusion and misunderstanding about the notion of developer charges (vs headworks charges). Tasmania currently lacks a framework within which councils can efficiently and confidently negotiate equitable infrastructure contributions from a developer. This lack of direction has resulted in protracted negotiations, inconsistent decision making and leaves all parties exposed to considerable risk.

There is certainly no interest on the part of councils to gouge funds from developers, but there needs to be a sensible and rigorous debate about an appropriate framework within which to equitably and efficiently charge for a specific contribution to infrastructure assets.

Climate Change

Legal liability concerns continue to hinder decision-making and action for Tasmanian councils. In Tasmania there is no clear legislated protection for councils in relation to legal liability. In particular, councils are unsure of their obligations when making land-use planning decisions relating to land that is subject to future climate change risks, particularly in coastal areas. The uncertainty extends to situations where councils must consider whether or not to install protective structures to combat the effects of natural hazards which will no doubt be exacerbated by climate change.

Councils must be provided with some legal and liability certainty if they are to continue to work with their communities to resolve these issues. The Association encourages State Government consideration of legislation to give similar effect to that provided by Section 733 of the *NSW Local Government Act*, which affords protection from legal liability for local councils where they provide advice or make a decision in good faith relating to coastal development.

Land-use planning systems should be revised to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible to enable a risk management approach to incorporating climate change risks into planning decisions. The Association notes the work carried out to date in relation to developing a State Framework for mitigating the impacts of natural hazards through land use planning. However this work still faces a number of hurdles which must be overcome. These include effective elucidation of the policy into the legislated land use planning requirements of councils and the need to acknowledge and prepare for possible future community reactions to the categorisation of land by hazard risk, given the likely implications for land values.

Further, historically there has been no clear understanding or agreement between the three tiers of government as to the roles and responsibilities of each tier of government in relation to climate change planning. In this vacuum of understanding, it is Local Government that is bearing the brunt of the responsibility.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- Continued investment in the Regional Planning Initiative to allow finalization of interim planning schemes and ongoing review.
- Collaboration with Local Government on strategic planning policy development.
- Completion of state-wide planning codes currently under development.
- Holistic and strategic outcomes focused approach to planning reform including review of the role and functions of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, mechanisms to improve the responsiveness of the planning system, review of related legislation to improve integration and reduce duplication and marketing of successes.
- Work with Local Government to develop a framework for developer charges that is transparent, equitable and consistent.
- Ensure protection from legal liability for councils where they provide advice or make a decision in good faith relating to coastal development.
- Work with councils to develop a framework for infrastructure contributions.



Waste Management

WASTE MANAGEMENT

In Tasmania, Local Government is currently responsible for the delivery of waste management services that revolve around collecting, disposing and reducing waste, while also striving to protect environmental health and public health. The sector has a strong track record in rising to the emerging challenges of waste management and being proactive in approaches.

Regular services provided by Local Government include:

- kerbside recycling,
- green waste collection,
- waste education,
- recycling drop-off centres and 'tip shops,'
- litter abatement and management, and
- management of transfer stations and landfills.

From 2009-2012 the Tasmanian Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) pilot program successfully delivered an opportunity for Tasmanians to safely dispose of over 78,000 kg of materials. The benefits included safer homes, a cleaner environment, less hazardous material going to landfill, a greater public awareness of household chemicals and a better understanding of how to coordinate a state-wide free drop-off program.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is Tasmania's principal environmental regulator and is supported by the EPA Division of the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. The EPA's responsibility for regulating waste related activities is clearly defined within the following pieces of legislation:

- *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*
- *Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Waste Management) Regulations 2010*
- *Environmental Management and Pollution Control (Controlled Waste Tracking) Regulations 2010*

Under the EPA sits the Waste Advisory Committee (WAC). The WAC has an independent Chair and 7 voting members, 3 of who represent Local Government's three regional waste bodies. Regional approaches to waste management in Tasmania are considered crucial to furthering key aspects of waste management in the state. These include amongst other things, strategic planning, waste data collection and reporting against agreed state wide objectives, the delivery of public awareness campaigns and ongoing dialogue between local and state government. Regional approaches also provide benefits and opportunities for councils in terms of sharing information and resources, to reduce duplication and to save costs.

Waste Levy

In recent times, other jurisdictions have introduced waste levy arrangements as a means to fund both innovation in the waste stream and meet the cost of the backlog of infrastructure requirements to adequately address the waste task. While historically Local Government has not been supportive of the introduction of a waste levy, a number of reports commissioned by regional waste bodies have determined that a significant injection of funding is necessary to address the emerging and existing waste issues in Tasmania, particularly as they relate to waste minimization and diversion.

Following conversations initiated by the Regional Waste Groups, LGAT has supported discussion across Local Government and with the State Government regarding the potential introduction of a Waste Levy. This is a significant departure for Tasmanian councils who agreed through a vote at a General Meeting :

1. That councils endorse the proposal to introduce a statutory waste levy of \$10 per tonne to be collected via public and private landfills;
2. That the funding be allocated on the basis of 20% to regional waste bodies; 10% to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and 70% to the Waste to Resources Funding Pool;
3. That these arrangements be on the basis that the funding is directly hypothecated to waste activities and is not consumed into the State Government Consolidated Fund;
4. That the Waste Advisory Committee be formally acknowledged within the legislation as having an integral role in the disbursement of funds from the Waste to Resources Funding Pool, providing recommendations to the EPA Board in accordance with relative priorities in the Waste to Resources Strategy.

The proposed levy is substantially less than that which is in place in other jurisdictions. This levy would apply to municipal and private landfills. The system of distribution would provide for maximum flexibility as waste recovery priorities change over time but would largely be driven by the state-wide waste management strategy.

One example of how the Resources Funding Pool might be used is in establishing a network of permanent household hazardous waste drop off sites as recommended in the *Strategic Review of the Collection of Household Hazardous Waste in Tasmania*.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Introduction of a statutory waste levy of \$10 per tonne, directly hypothecated to waste activities, distributed to regional waste bodies, the EPA and a waste resources funding pool, to be collected via public and private landfills in order to address existing and emerging waste issues.**



State/Local Government Relations

STATE/LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

State and Local Government in Tasmania have long recognised the potential benefits for their shared communities of a strong and collaborative working relationship between the two spheres of Government.

Shared and sector wide Local Government schemes and arrangements within this State have been the envy of others Australia wide. The establishment of the Premier's Local Government Council in 2000 and the signing of the Statewide Partnership Agreement on Communication and Consultation set in place clear statements of intent about better strategic alignment in planning, policy development and mutual engagement.

Effective and appropriate communication and consultation between Local Government and the State Government is essential for a close working relationship and decision-making that will benefit Tasmanian communities.

Premier's Local Government Council

The Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) is a high-level forum for discussions between the State Government and Local Government on issues of statewide significance. With membership comprising the Premier, the Minister for Local Government, the President of the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) and elected Local Government representatives from various Tasmanian councils; the PLGC is able ensure a range of common concerns are strategically and collaboratively addressed.

State Partnership Agreement on Consultation and Communication

The statewide partnership agreement on communication and consultation (the Agreement) supports ongoing communication and consultation on legislation and policy between both levels of government through setting out consultation timeframes and protocols for engagement with Local Government on policy, budget and legislative proposals. The Agreement is designed to ensure collaboration wherever possible and recognises that councils play an important part representing their communities.

While the documentation and mechanisms to implement a collaborative State/Local Government relations agenda have existed for some time, councils have however experienced many examples where both the spirit and intent was lost within agencies, and on occasion by Ministers. As well as the continuation of the formal agreements, Local Government calls on a newly elected State Government to commit to helping agencies understand the vital and constructive role that Local Government can play. Through cooperation and the recognition that we both serve the same communities, we can achieve more.

Local Government Division

The Local Government Association of Tasmania has enjoyed a strong and practical relationship with the Local Government Division of State Government, jointly progressing issues of relevance to the sector including financial and asset management reform, a review of rating and valuation and amendments to the Local Government Act. The resourcing of the Division is important to continuing to improve the capacity of the sector

including concluding current projects such as the Code of Conduct review, annual data collection improvements, Role of Local Government and further amendments to the Local Government Act. The Association calls on the incoming State Government to commit to maintaining the resources of the Local Government Division.

Reducing Red Tape

Local Government agrees with the major parties that it is important to reduce the time spent on compliance by business where such compliance does not add relative value. While councils are often accused of being responsible for red tape, councils implement legislation developed by Commonwealth and State Governments and often have little control over regulatory activities. What they do have is a strong sense of what is necessary for community health and safety versus activities which are lower risk or lacking in clarity and consistency of approach and therefore can be a vital source of information and advice in red tape reviews.

Therefore Local Government calls on a new State Government to commit to working together to ensure both levels of Government interact in the most efficient way, in particular the removal of unnecessary red tape and regulations wherever possible.

Local Government Reform

Tasmanian councils welcome the commitment of both the major parties to 'no forced amalgamations'. A number of academics have shown empirically that there is no improvement in council viability or significant reductions in both costs and rates as a consequence of such amalgamations. In fact, they have found the opposite to be true with, historically, the costs of amalgamation badly under-estimated.

Increasing the size of councils may be seen to destroy the 'local' character of a community by lumping residents from different areas together. All Australian Local Government systems have undergone, or are undergoing amalgamation and in some cases (Qld, NT) have since undertaken de-amalgamations. There is often reference to the smaller size of Tasmanian councils in arguments for amalgamation. However, while Tasmanian councils may not seem as large as mainland ones, in general Australian local authorities are the fourth largest amongst OECD countries.

Councils are not manifestations of themselves – they exist to represent local communities and to ensure that the interests and service provision to those communities is provided and maintained.

Local Government is the heart of many communities and when there is a downturn in a particular area through business closure or industry restructuring, it is the local council on the front line looking to assist and support those in the community that have lost jobs and livelihoods. Councils play a major role in facilitating business start-ups and investment attraction.

As for claims of inefficiency in the management of roads and other infrastructure, there is simply no argument to demonstrate that fewer councils would deliver better outcomes or indeed that the current arrangements are not delivering the best outcomes for local communities.

Tasmanian councils are increasingly sharing resources (human and equipment) across a range of functional and strategic areas, working collaboratively and leveraging of whole of sector arrangements resulting in reduced costs and improved outcomes. Through both regional and sectoral discussions, further opportunities to improve efficiencies are continually being explored.

It is not the aim of councils to hinder business and developers. Local Government has a range of statutory functions that are derived from State legislation. It is the role of Local Government to administer and uphold these regulations and rules to ensure that the health, well-being and amenity of the whole community are well served.

It must be remembered that Tasmania led the amalgamation process in the nineties and significantly reduced council numbers and reformed the way councils operated prior to the much touted Victorian reforms. The consolidation of water and sewerage into a single entity has also provided councils with improved capacity to focus on their core functions and service commitments to their communities.

If there are problems the regulatory mechanisms and requirements then perhaps they need to be fixed rather than creating the massive upheaval that would result from structural reform of Local Government.

Realistically, most people out in the community are only interested in what services are delivered and not how councils deliver them. Resource sharing as an alternative to amalgamation, ensures small group representation is maintained.

Example:

The Local Government Association is a member of the National Procurement Network – an alliance of state and territory Local Government associations which combines the purchasing power of 350 councils nationally. Tenders are advertised in Tasmania and therefore open to Tasmanian based suppliers. Consequently LGAT is able to offer all members access to:

- **Better pricing for a range of goods (savings on government list prices of up to 30%).**
- **Significant time saved in preparing tender and contract documentation.**
- **Significant time saved in reviewing and appointing appropriate suppliers.**
- **The benefit of nearly always being able to purchase the goods locally – so providing support to local businesses.**

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Continue the Premier's Local Government Council as a key intergovernmental group charged with the responsibility to enhance the strategic relationship between our two spheres of government.**
- **Agree to negotiate a State/Local Government Relations Agreement, to be signed by the Premier and the LGA President, that addresses the manner in which the spheres of government will work together, including protocols for consultation on legislation.**
- **Take steps to ensure that Ministers, Ministerial Advisors, Chief Executives and other key State Government staff are made aware of the State/Local Government Relations Agreement and Cabinet documents make reference to the Agreement as appropriate.**
- **Continue to resource the Local Government Division to support best practice and capacity building in the Local Government Sector.**
- **Involve Local Government in identifying red tape between both spheres of government and agree on strategies to address issues identified.**
- **No forced amalgamations - but support to build opportunities for resource sharing.**



Local Government Revenue

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE

Local Government maintains a vast network of local roads, footpaths, bridges, drains, parks, recreation reserves and buildings. All of these require maintenance, repair and eventual renewal and therefore long-term financial planning. The unexpected costs of any disaster mitigation or other unexpected events can jeopardise these long-term financial plans.

In Tasmania at 30 June 2013, councils were maintaining assets valued in excess of \$8 billion for the community. However we often underestimate the importance of things like the roads, that we use every day, and the hard infrastructure like culverts and drains that mean we can carry on business as usual when we have heavy rains.

Local Government also delivers many additional services in ways other than directly through the provision of infrastructure. These include waste collection, recycling, immunisation, and environmental health. While councils have been successful in providing these services to their communities, this is not without its challenges.

Relative to annual operating revenue, the Tasmanian Local Government sector is far more asset intensive (the value of assets compared to operating revenue) than the State and Commonwealth Governments. In conforming to Australian Accounting Standards, there are strict requirements to value assets regularly and fund the cost of depreciation. This can be significant and is often reflected in the amount of cash held by councils in reserve. This does not mean councils are over charging or hoarding funds unnecessarily. Indeed Tasmanian councils provide significant economic stimulus. In the past 4 years, Tasmanian councils have spent collectively on average \$200 million per annum and in the next four years they will spend approximately \$750 million on infrastructure maintenance, upgrade and renewal.

In delivering its services, Local Government must operate in a financial environment that is unnecessarily constrained by doubt about the legality of Commonwealth financial grants. Local Government/s nationally continue to call for a referendum to be constitutionally recognised. The LGA calls on a newly elected State Government to support this important change.

As the closest level of government to the people, the vast majority of Local Government work is focused on direct provision of local services, planning and the provision of local and regional infrastructure. Local Government services and infrastructure are used every day by every Australian. Whether it's using a footpath, driving to work on a local road, playing sport at a council facility, getting your children immunized, or having your rubbish collected, our lives are touched by Local Government in many different ways.

Rating Capability

Under the current government, following a comprehensive review of Local Government valuation and rating practices and policies, it has been decided:

“ that the implementation of the major reform requiring all councils to move to capital value and changes to the valuation cycle should be deferred, but that in order to progress the findings of the Review, the Department of Premier and Cabinet should ‘undertake a capability building program to build Local Government sector support and preparedness for any future change in the valuation system’.

This is on the basis “the response to consultation throughout the review and other observations suggest that not all councils possess the systems and skills required to manage more complex ratings policies”¹, and that “if the State agreed to move to an alternate base, it will be important to ensure that adequate time is provided for transition and that the State works with the LGAT to improve the capabilities in this area”¹.

LGAT calls on an incoming government to commit to the capability program including support for detailed impact modeling of different rating scenarios.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Support Local Government’s desire to be directly funded by the Federal Government and work together on strategies that may emerge from the Federal Government to secure Local Government funding programs.**
- **Ensure adequate resourcing to continue to improve the capability of councils with regard to implementing rating policies and practices which have regard to social and economic issues in local communities.**

¹ Local Government Division



Roads and other Infrastructure

INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Infrastructure funding does not mean only funding for new infrastructure. Local Government manages more than \$8 billion of assets (as at 30 June 2013); most of which is infrastructure in the form of roads, footpaths, bridges, drains and culverts. Maintaining this infrastructure so that it continues to provide adequate services to communities is a major financial challenge to councils.

Better roads can save lives, investment in utility infrastructure can help reduce the cost of living and make our State more environmentally sustainable, not to mention drive economic growth and tourism.

These billions of dollars of assets in the Local Government sector are often ancillary to or in support of other infrastructure decisions made by State Government through its various agencies and enterprises. While efforts have been made to highlight the significance of infrastructure to economic development through the establishment of the Tasmanian Infrastructure Advisory Council, it is not clear that the outcomes from this process have adequately addressed the needs and priorities of infrastructure in the state nor has it delivered clear communication of intent or strategic direction for the state. Although the Council is well represented by infrastructure managers/owners, it is considered imperative that there be personnel that are able to consider issues beyond any individual agency perspective and priorities. Infrastructure is the backbone of economic prosperity and the strategic decisions that are taken influence the future health of the state.

There must be clear signals from State Government on its directions for infrastructure and the investments it will be seeking to make over coming decades. These matters are not term of government issues but have implications for coming decades. An incoming Government needs to be alert to the need to secure and promote bi- and tri- partisan support and prioritization of these key assets and provide clear messaging to business and communities alike to allow for appropriate planning and investment decisions.

Councils are key to this discussion and need to be aware of the potential growth areas and investment decisions that will impact on their local areas. If the wrong decisions are made it is not only the poor outcome in that project that costs the community, but also the lost opportunities. LGAT calls on the State Government to engage and collaborate with Local Government at the earliest opportunity on these key decisions to ensure that the best result is achieved for the State as a whole and for local communities.

Local Government manages more than \$8 billion of assets most of which is infrastructure in the form of roads, footpaths, bridges, drains and culverts.

ROADS

Roads are the arteries of all our communities and in particular are the life blood of our regions. Local Government is responsible for over 14,000 kilometres of road in Tasmania; with over 7 000 thousand kilometres sealed. In rural areas, operational expenditure on roads and bridges comprises more than 36% of functional expenditure.

While Local Government encourages a newly elected State Government to ensure adequate investment is made into State owned roads, Local Government also calls for a review of the way in which roads are classified.

A number of roads that are under the care of councils are strategically important to the entire State and carry more than just local traffic. It is neither fair nor sustainable that this continues as ultimately the financial burden of maintaining the road to a safe standard should not be borne by ratepayers of one council area.

While the overall standard of the State Road Network remains of reasonable standard, there remain key sections that require improved maintenance and upgrading. The efforts to shift freight from road to rail has had some success but the fact remains that much of the freight task continues to be largely road based.

There continues to be a large number of interstate drivers using the state and local road networks in sometimes less than optimum weather conditions or visibility. It is extremely important that tourists venturing into some of the states pristine and “adventure” offerings are provided with the best possible road surfaces to ensure the safety of their journey and promote tourism which then returns benefits – economic and cultural – to the State.

Forestry Roads

Throughout the State there are many roads other than council and state roads that were previously maintained by either Forestry Tasmania or private timber companies. Those roads are no longer maintained by these bodies and councils have a resulting concern in relation to access, amenity and the safety of road users.

Councils receive numerous complaints and enquiries from residents who reside alongside these roads. As an example, a route of particular significance is the Wielangta Road on the State’s East Coast that crosses the three municipal areas of Glamorgan-Spring Bay, Sorell and Tasman and is used frequently by residents, visitors and tourists.

It is important that there be provisions in place to ensure these routes are maintained to an appropriate standard and that issues around future ownership, maintenance and upkeep for these roads be clarified.

Bus Shelters

The issue of responsibility for the construction of roadside bus stop shelters has been uncertain for many years. The establishment and maintenance of bus stop infrastructure is currently carried out in an ad-hoc manner by DIER, Metro and Local Government and no standard approach has been developed despite previous efforts of the Association to clarify roles and responsibilities with the other organisations.

This is an area of significant concern for councils in light of the need to comply with the national Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) which requires that all bus stops fully comply with the DDA Standards by the year 2022. The Standards stipulate the disabled access requirements for bus stops, and combined with Tasmania’s hilly topography, will prove onerous and costly to implement in a large number of cases.

There needs to be clarification of responsibilities around the construction and upkeep of bus stop infrastructure, and collaboration between the relevant parties to ensure an appropriate approach is developed and funding allocated in response to the requirements of the 2022 target.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **That there continue to be a collaborative approach to jointly planning, prioritising and delivering infrastructure of state and regional significance, such as through the Tasmanian Infrastructure Advisory Committee; and that this group have a greater capacity to drive outcomes.**
- **That an engagement strategy for Local Government be developed and agreed for State projects and activities that impact on councils, with engagement to occur in the early stages of project analysis and decision making.**
- **That there be consideration of reclassifying local roads which are important to the entire State and which carry more than local traffic to shift the maintenance burden from ratepayers.**
- **That there is adequate funding to maintain and upgrade State roads, particularly those linked to popular tourist routes.**
- **That routes formerly maintained by Forestry Tasmania are kept at appropriate standard and that issues around future ownership, maintenance and upkeep for these roads be clarified without a significant new and unfunded infrastructure burden being placed with Local Government.**
- **That there is a genuine dialogue with State Government to clarify the responsibilities around the construction and upkeep of bus stop infrastructure which ensures DDA compliance and that there is funding to support implementation.**



Disaster Resilience/ Emergency Management

DISASTER RESILIENCE/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Many Tasmanian communities are vulnerable to flooding and bushfires. More than five councils have been impacted by floods in the last 4 years and the January 2013 Bushfires had a devastating effect on the Tasman Peninsula.

Identifying risks and planning prevention and mitigation measures are key issues for Local Government in Tasmania. The Association, with the State Government, is assisting Local Governments to plan for disaster resilience.

Funding arrangements between Federal, State and Local Government need to ensure that adequate work is done to mitigate floods and bushfires in priority areas. Local Government calls on all parties to make strong commitment to funding to support mitigation activities and also lobbying their Federal counterparts.

The incoming Government must appropriately fund the implementation of the recommendations to come out of the Tasmanian Bushfire Enquiry and Local Government must be involved in discussions around recommendations effecting Local Government.

Local Government calls on the State Government to lobby the Federal Government to ensure that Tasmanian funding through the Natural Disaster Resilience Program is increased and that an allocation of this funding is quarantined specifically for Local Government.

Further, Local Government seeks the provision of resources to assist councils to implement the planning and risk assessment processes required through the Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan and to lobby the federal government to ensure that emergency management training provided through the Australian Emergency Management Institute remains free for Local Government employees.

As well as Local Government's important role in risk management and planning for emergencies, councils are key to the recovery of communities post disaster. It is essential that funding is made readily available to councils through the Tasmanian Relief and Recovery Arrangements to support infrastructure recovery and betterment projects so that communities are given the best chance to recover quickly from emergencies.

Research has shown that for every dollar invested in disaster mitigation or prevention there is a \$2 to \$6 reduction in the cost of disaster recovery. This doesn't include social and human cost (LGASA).

Implementation of the Bushfire Code

The implementation of the bushfire prone areas planning code has been problematic owing to a number of issues. These include a lack of accredited personnel through to unforeseen consequences on legacy parcels of land and existing subdivisions.

In relation to existing subdivisions, the first parcels to be developed may have an elevated Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating due to the uncleared vegetation of neighbouring land. This may result in an unreasonable and temporary impact on planning and building requirements.

Local Government strongly advocates for a change in the definition of bushfire prone areas so that all residential parcels under 1200sqm created before PD5 was applied have a set BAL for building and planning purposes and don't require a Part V agreement regardless as to whether there is vegetation on neighbouring residential land.

In rural townships, the issue is more complex in that effectively all development in the town may attract a higher BAL assessment and subsequent higher cost of development – stifling potential economic activity. Some councils are developing Fire Management Plans for townships to address this and drive their abatement programs but such plans are costly to councils to develop and implement. The Association seeks a commitment from an incoming Government that assistance (financial or in-kind) will be given to develop township fire management plans for rural towns.

If fire management plans are completed to the right standard they could ultimately lead to far better coordinated community protection planning and fire management at a townscape level while still supporting considered and appropriate development without the increase in cost and complexity the new code has now brought to bear. If developed, there should be provision within the Code to then allow for a BAL exception or a low rating to be achieved.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Increased funding for bushfire management planning and response to ensure all risk areas have a current mitigation plan.**
- **Lobby the Federal Government to ensure that emergency management training provided through the Australian Emergency Management Institute remains free for Local Government employees and that Tasmanian funding through the Natural Disaster Resilience Program is increased and that an allocation of this funding is quarantined specifically for Local Government.**
- **Provide resources to assist councils to implement the planning and risk assessment processes required through the Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan and ensure that funding is made readily available to councils through the Tasmanian Relief and Recovery Arrangements to support infrastructure recovery and betterment projects so that communities are given the best chance to recover quickly from emergencies.**
- **Change the definition of bushfire prone areas to allow for effective building on residential subdivision.**
- **Resourcing for the development of township fire management plans in rural areas.**



Regional Development

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Local Government is fully aware of the vital role that regional communities, businesses and industries play in the social, economic and environmental health of the State. Regions contribute significantly to the State's economy .

It is critical to have continued investment to maintain and upgrade State-owned infrastructure in regional areas. State roads were discussed previously but other examples might include: bridges, signage, hospitals and health centres, schools and public housing. A lack of investment in regional infrastructure is a severe limitation to regional development.

Regional Tasmania plays an important role in the economic sustainability of the State. As councils are often the only form of elected government located in a geographical area, they are an integral part of regional life. That is why Local Government in regional areas needs to be involved in and consulted on matters that might not otherwise be relevant to their metropolitan cousins. This can include matters that have social, economic and environmental consequence for the area and region.

Councils underpin regional economic development through the provision of infrastructure, services and planning for the sustainable development of their communities. They are best placed to understand the pressures being brought to bear on the regions, including population aging and drift, the need for economic diversification to expand regional markets and local employment.

Local Government is committed to partnering with the State Government to jointly plan and deliver programs, initiatives and services to enhance the development of regional communities.

Regional Development Australia funding arrangements and partnerships have become uncertain under the new Federal Government and the RDA structures are in doubt. With this uncertainty, Local Government considers it vital to develop alternative arrangements and structures. Local Government remains committed to continuing its partnership with the State in advancing regional development, (whether via councils or regional authorities, and/or alternative regional structures). The Association calls on an incoming State Government to advocate for appropriate funding arrangements for Tasmania's regional communities.

Collaboration between tiers of government, industry and community is the key to achieving a common understanding of regional issues and tailoring effective solutions. Partnerships are critical to the success of regional development efforts, as is a focus on place and valuing the unique aspects of every region and community (RDA Tasmania 2013)

Local Government is keen to contribute to regional development structures and processes so long as there is a commitment to the achievement of results and resources dedicated to the delivery of outcomes. Identification of challenges and opportunities provides the catalyst for action but that action must be forthcoming with accountable resourcing and constant communication.

Local Government is not so foolhardy as to expect instant results but there must be a commitment to the longer term and resourcing should not be withdrawn or redirected simply because obstacles arise or other more fashionable opportunities present themselves. Economic development plans and strategies should all be looked at and considered on their merits but there needs to be a clear understanding by all of the overall game plan, the role of participants in that game plan and the efforts that will be required by each. Local Government is set for that challenge and the State Government must recognise that it has an important role to play in supporting regional development and working with communities in developing solutions to regional issues. These issues are not necessarily the same as those faced by metropolitan areas and differences need to be recognized.

It needs to also be recognised that local communities are different. A well meaning but often cumbersome bureaucracy consisting of a number of large agencies that frequently do not work together with each other and do not understand local communities can exacerbate problems. The Association calls on a newly elected State Government to commit to machinery of government changes which deliver better coordination across multiple government agencies.

COMMITMENT SOUGHT

- **Continued to invest and maintain regional infrastructure to support regional development.**
- **Advocate to the Federal Government for appropriate funding arrangements for regional communities under the National Stronger Regions Program.**
- **Work in partnership with the Local Government in advancing regional development.**
- **Machinery of Government changes to ensure better coordination across multiple government agencies.**