

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA

## YEAR IN REVIEW 2020-2021



### OUR VISION



Vibrant Tasmanian communities.

### OUR MISSION



Help Tasmanian councils be the best they can be for their communities.

### OUR CORE PURPOSE



To protect and represent the interests and rights of councils in Tasmania.

To promote an efficient and effective system of Local Government in Tasmania.

Provide services to Members, councillors and employees of councils.

**#PARTOFOUREVERYDAY**

**During a year when our community came to grips with the wide-ranging implications of the global COVID-19 pandemic, our Year in Review reflects LGAT's commitment to serve councils and the Tasmanian people.**

Supporting members in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has remained a significant priority. Our submission to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) emphasised the need for place-based and community-led recovery.

LGAT has continued to work with the State Government to deliver PESRAC's recommendations and provide practical support, facilitation and communication to meet councils' needs.

In 2020-21, LGAT expanded its procurement services, working closely with councils and suppliers to optimise efficiency and effectiveness. As a result, the estimated value for members to June 2021 is more than \$1.3 million, which is more than members paid in subscription to LGAT.

Our advocacy work continues behind the scenes across various policy areas. For example, the team successfully secured a State Government commitment to update the Regional Land Use Strategies and increased resources for planning at the state level. Along similar lines, we are now in regular contact with the government to secure a review of the *Building Act 2016*.

Waste and resource recovery has been a highly successful area of advocacy for LGAT. We remain heavily engaged in the implementation stages, working with the State Government on the details of the Container Refund Scheme (CRS) and state-wide waste

levy. Our CEO's role on the Minister's Waste and Resource Recovery Advisory Group has been instrumental in guiding the CRS governance model for Tasmania and ensuring the introduction of the waste levy was appropriately timed and supported our more remote councils.

While this publication is about LGAT's achievements during the past 12 months, it would be remiss of me to not close by mentioning the local government review process that we are all about to embark on. Hopefully, many of you will have been able to view the recording of the Minister for Local Government's recent presentation to a Special General Meeting. If not, I encourage you to watch it via [this link](#).

Work has commenced between LGAT and the government on the detailed design of the review, so we should have some further details to communicate before the end of this year. I remain of the view that we are at the beginning of an exciting period for the Tasmanian local government sector and as President of LGAT, I commit to keeping all members informed of how the process is developing and all the opportunities for you to engage.

Finally, I would like to thank the General Management Committee and LGAT staff for your commitment to delivering a high standard of work during a challenging year. You have given members excellent value for money and provided services that help councils be the best they can be for their communities.

**Mayor Christina Holmdahl**  
PRESIDENT



*Christina Holmdahl*

**Over the past 12-months, COVID-19 has once again dominated LGAT's activities, with us moving to support councils in delivering community recovery this year. With the borders opening very soon, COVID-19 will remain a significant consideration for all of us. However, a new challenge and opportunity presents itself for the year ahead: the review of local government. This process, envisaged by PESRAC, has morphed into a collaborative review on local government's future role and functions.**

The role of councils has changed significantly over the years, along with community expectations of what services a council should provide. Once focused on 'services to property', councils now offer a broader range of 'services to people'. The current review responds to this evolution and is not about structural reform (i.e. amalgamations). Instead, the interest of the State Government, and our sector, has shifted to how local government can maintain contemporary service delivery to communities while also addressing current and emerging challenges. The initial 18-month process and subsequent implementation phase will be the number one priority for LGAT and likely consume significant resources from our small agile team. This work will be managed amongst the many other policy priorities we are working on, some of which are outlined in this annual report.

LGAT will continue to strive for a review process to understand what councils are delivering well and the challenges they face. We believe this, alongside extensive engagement with the community, will best capture the critical services and connections that councils provide and opportunities for the future.

Through a collaborative review process, we will realise the opportunity to learn what communities need and examine the best and most efficient options to deliver on those needs.

Alongside the significant review program, we will maintain our efforts to support, promote, advocate for, and represent Tasmanian councils, so they are best able to serve their communities. Our updated Strategic Plan outlines how we will do this, and along with our Annual Plan, it provides more detail on the key policy priorities we will be progressing. Both are available on our [website here](#).

Following my first year as LGAT CEO, I would like to take this opportunity to say what a privilege it is to support the local government sector. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work of the LGAT secretariat. Our small but highly skilled team delivers an extraordinary amount of work for the sector.

**Dion Lester**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) has been the peak body for local government in Tasmania for over 100 years.**

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

We also support and develop members through professional development, events and training opportunities.

All 29 of Tasmania's councils are members. LGAT works collaboratively with our members to support councils and the communities they serve and represent.

## GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The General Management Committee (GMC) has eight members and provides oversight of LGAT operations. The GMC is elected by LGAT members every two years. 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.

## Mayor Christina Holmdahl

President from July 2019  
Elected to GMC July 2015

## Mayor Mick Tucker,

Vice President  
Northern Region  
Vice President from June 2021  
Elected to GMC Jul 2017

## Mayor Peter Freshney

North West Region  
Elected to GMC June 2021

## Mayor Annette Rockliff West

North West Region  
Elected to GMC July 2019

## Deputy Mayor Danny Gibson

Northern Region  
Elected to GMC June 2021

## Mayor Alex Green

Southern Region  
Elected to GMC June 2021

## Mayor Bec Thomas

Southern Region  
Elected to GMC June 2021

## Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds

City of Hobart  
Commenced July 2019

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The [Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#) provides the overview for the direction and work plan of the Association for this planning period. The Strategic Plan contains five key focus areas for the 2017 to 2021 period:

- Facilitating change across local government
- Building local government's reputation
- Fostering collaboration
- Promoting financial sustainability
- Underpinning local government capacity and capability to deliver.

## KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2020-21:

- Lead the waste management reform agenda
- Support the sector through the next stages of local government reform
- Influence the planning and red tape reduction reform agendas
- Continue to expand the procurement program
- Support councils' role in community health and wellbeing
- Support councils' infrastructure planning and financing arrangements
- Continue to support Member's professional development
- Support councils' recovery efforts from COVID-19.

## STATE ELECTION



A general election for the House of Assembly occurred on 1 May 2021, and an election for the Legislative Council seats of Derwent, Mersey and Windermere took place on the same day.

Our election priorities were identified based on previously highlighted areas of sectoral interest that aligned with partner organisations, who were willing to support our priorities, strengthening our voice.

The LGAT [Election Priority webpage](#) provided information on the priority requests, media releases and opinion editorials. We released a different priority during each campaign week, aiming to lead or leverage off the campaign or partner activities.

Our advocacy work throughout the State Election provided favourable results against our planning, mental health and bushfire risk priority areas, with the government committing:

- \$3.45 million to undertake a comprehensive review of the Regional Land Use Strategies.
- Additional funding of \$67.2 million towards the delivery of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and \$20 million for prevention and early intervention to improve the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.
- Further funding of \$2.5 million for the Red Hot Tips Program to support farmers and landholders to conduct private burn-offs, and \$2.5 million for the Fuel Reduction Program.

In addition, following the State Election, the Legislative Council established an inquiry on road safety. This followed calls by LGAT and others throughout the election campaign for greater investment in road safety in Tasmania.

## BUILDING



We commenced providing job-relevant training for councils. This was to fill the gap created in 2019 when Consumer, Building and Occupational Services stopped running their Permit Authority Forums, significantly reducing professional development (CPD) opportunities. Permit Authority licencing mandates an annual mandatory 12 CPD points. The LGAT Permit Authority meetings provide a forum for peer learning and an avenue to inform LGAT's ongoing advocacy on building matters.

LGAT is also working hard behind the scenes to secure a review of the *Building Act 2016*.

We are hopeful that the Tasmanian Government will hear the growing chorus of calls for a review to resolve the increasing concerns around our building regulation system.

## CLIMATE CHANGE



Our focus in 2020-21 has been to understand councils existing actions and priorities for climate change across emissions reduction and adaptation.

We surveyed members and found a significant amount of work underway across areas such as energy efficiency, solar, waste programs and responding to climate hazards like coastal erosion and inundation, bushfire and flooding. However, the barriers of limited staff capacity, funding and state and federal leadership were significant issues.

LGAT reflected councils concerns in our submission to review the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* and the next Tasmanian Climate Change Action Plan. The draft bill to amend the Act reflected many of our positions, including that the State Government provides regularly updated climate risk assessments, actively plans and undertakes climate adaptation in partnership with the community and reduces emissions across all of the Tasmanian economy.



Waratah Wynyard Council staff keen to recycle. Photo: Waratah Wynyard Council and Anna Halipillas.



## COVID-19



We continued our significant support for councils in navigating and responding to the COVID-19 emergency. This included a comprehensive suite of guidance and related materials on [our COVID-19 page](#). These activities were broad and ongoing and also included sectoral advocacy and advice, facilitating webinars with the sector, council support for messaging and communication material. A significant component of our effort was to closely liaise with the State Government to ensure their responses were mindful of the range of council services, community needs and councils' role in recovery.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



The review of the *Fire Service Act 1979* continues. LGAT provided a sectoral response to the Blake Fire Service Act Review, with many of the issues raised by the sector included in the final report. During the year, the State Government released a draft Bushfire Mitigation Bill. We successfully communicated the sectors significant concerns with the Bill. As a result, the government shelved the Bill and will now consider it as part of the review of the *Fire Service Act*.

## ENERGY



We established an ongoing forum with TasNetworks to improve engagement, increase transparency and overcome existing barriers to project delivery. LGAT is also actively working with TasNetworks as they look to implement their development application referral requirements. Work also started to establish a Service Level Agreement to replace faulty LED streetlights owned by councils.

## FINANCIAL AND ASSET MANAGEMENT



LGAT has continued its work in supporting councils in financial and [asset management](#). For example, we facilitated the Tasmanian Asset Management Group's regular meetings and organised professional training in Completing your Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP), delivered in partnership with the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australasia (IPWEA).

We also supported a subsequent SAMP Case Study session, delivered and made possible by valuable collaborative contributions from asset management professionals at councils who have completed their SAMP.

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS



We collaborated with the IPWEA Tasmania and councils (in particular Brighton Council officers who contributed the technical work) to deliver two updates to the Tasmanian Municipal Standards Drawings in 2020.

We also worked with councils, the Derwent Estuary Program and NRM North on guidance documentation to provide clarity to address the gap in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme on stormwater.

Stage 1 work at Carisbrook Lane, Legerwood.  
Photo: Dorset Council.



## HEALTH AND WELLBEING



We continued to advocate for recognition of the essential role of local government in improving the community's wellbeing outcomes as part of our Community Health and Wellbeing Project.

A range of organisations, including TASCOS, Mental Health Council of Tasmania, Relationships Tasmania and Volunteering Tasmania, recognised the importance of councils as partners in providing locally appropriate services.

LGAT and the Mental Health Council collaborated during the election campaign to highlight the particular needs of rural communities, following LGAT's strong advocacy to the State Government on mental health services gaps in rural and regional communities. These became evident though councils' deep local knowledge of their communities, particularly through the COVID-19 pandemic. We also collaborated with the Public Health Service on developing the Healthy Tasmania Plan 2022-27, positioning the role of local government as a critical local level preventative health partner.

The Environmental Health Workforce Strategy was released, confirming LGAT's knowledge of significant staffing and equitable distribution shortcomings across the state. The recommendations have informed our advocacy and provided a foundation for strengthening the local government's vital public health function.



Alongside this work, we also worked in partnership across a range of programs and projects. These include:

- Our Watch and the Department of Communities to support councils' work on safe families and violence against women.
- Relationships Tasmania and the Department of Health supporting council-based Community Action Plans for suicide prevention.
- The State Government's food security reference group to develop the best ways to improve food security for local communities.
- Menzies Rural Walkability Research Project that assessed the environments and needs across Tasmania's rural and regional areas.



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

In what seems like a distant memory before the COVID-19 pandemic, the government commenced a significant review of the *Local Government Act 1993*. This work was put on hold during the acute phase of the pandemic and then re-commenced earlier this year, with detailed policy work via the Steering Committee.

Through our role on the Steering Committee we continued to emphasise the need for a practical and flexible legislative framework.

It is likely that a new *Local Government Act* will be put on hold, pending the local government review process recently announced by the government. However, our advocacy work undertaken to date certainly won't be in vain, as work on the new Act will need to commence almost immediately following the broader review of local government.



Top - Launceston City Council staff enjoy the visit of a furry friend.  
Photo: Zara Dawtrey.

Bottom - Mountain bike riding on the West Coast of Tasmania.  
Photo: West Coast Council and For the People.



## PESRAC



The Premier established PESRAC to advise the government on strategies and initiatives to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The final PESRAC report was delivered to the Premier on 16 March 2021. LGAT provided submissions on behalf of the sector to both the interim and final reports.

PESRAC's final report made 52 recommendations that the Premier accepted before the state election. While much of our sectors' attention has been on the recommendations related to local government reform, it should not be forgotten that community-led and locally tailored recovery was recognised through feedback and the final report. The report went further to note that

"our local government sector will be a key agent in recovery and, for it to do so, the sector needs to be resilient and sustainable."

This is widely understood within our sector, so receiving this acknowledgement is important and something our sector should be proud of. The feedback to the PESRAC process is an essential reminder to all council elected representatives and staff of the important role you play in building resilient sustainable communities.

It was also pleasing to see that last year's LGAT's 21st Century Councils Project was heavily referenced in the local government reform recommendations.

## PLANNING



It was a very successful year for our planning advocacy, with several key sector priorities addressed. Leading up to and during the 2021 State Election, LGAT worked hard advocating for the completion of the strategic foundations of our planning system, the Tasmanian Planning Policies and critically needed update of the three Regional Land Use Strategies. This advocacy was successful, and the Tasmanian Government has begun work, which includes significant support for councils to progress the regional strategies at the local level.

LGAT has also been pushing for improved public information on the Tasmanian planning system, resulting in the overhaul of the Tasmanian Government's Planning Reform website into the new Planning in Tasmania site.

## WASTE



In mid-2019, the State Government released its Draft Waste Action Plan (WAP) after several years of sustained advocacy by LGAT. The WAP was welcomed by the sector, as it contained many commitments that we had been calling for. However, a level of concern remained as there were important details still to be resolved. This year saw many of those commitments developed and implemented. Most notably, the drafting of legislation for the CRS and the state-wide waste levy. At the time of writing, both are before Parliament.

In addition, our advocacy ensured that the design of the waste levy maintains the critical activities of the regional waste groups, supports our remote councils, and introduces sufficient lead time for our sector to be prepared.

LGAT successfully secured the 'split governance' model for the CRS, recognised as the best arrangement for resource recovery and litter reduction.

We have achieved a lot in the last two years across waste and resource recovery policy and legislation. Now that the fundamental building blocks are in place, it is time for our state to look at what opportunities are available with the circular economy.



L to R: Kingborough Council Deputy Mayor Jo Westwood and Mayor Paula Wreidt discussing recycling with Margate Primary School students. Photo: Kingborough Council.



## PROCUREMENT



This year councils saved more than \$1.3 million through LGAT procurement panels, equating to more than the total member subscriptions paid to LGAT.

We also facilitated a grouped small sites energy tender for interested councils, with savings expected to be in the order of \$2.7 million over the four-year contract period.

Engagement of the sector and suppliers increased significantly during the 2020/21 financial year. LGAT ran ten training sessions for councils and increased our outreach to suppliers. As a result, we set up eleven new and refreshed panels and have increased the number of local Tasmanian suppliers.

## EVENTS AND TRAINING



LGAT hosted a range of events and training throughout the year to encourage and support learning for members. In addition to our regular events such as the Elected Representatives weekend, Mayors and General Manager's workshops, we delivered the highly successful Monthly Webinar Series throughout 2020. These forums covered a range of topics on health and wellbeing, emergency management, insurance, asset management and procurement.

### International Women's Day Awards

LGAT, TasCOSS and the Tasmanian State Service again hosted the International Women's Day cross-sector awards. This year the event welcomed the Local Government Professionals as a key partner. In 2021, the event was delivered online as at the time of planning, there was still significant uncertainty regarding COVID-19 restrictions. The keynote speaker was 2021 Australian of the Year, Ms Grace Tame. Grace shared her extraordinary story on how she used her voice to push for legal reform and raise public awareness about the impacts of sexual violence.

The winners of the Tasplan International Women's Day Awards for Excellence 2021 across the local government inspirational leader categories were Mayor Mary Knowles, Northern Midlands Council (councillor) and Karen Hampton, Community Services Manager, Devonport City Council (officer).

Feedback was very positive, with over 94% of the attendees indicating that the awards program was a valuable way to recognise the contributions of women across the sector.

### 108th LGAT Annual Conference

In December 2020, we delivered an abbreviated Annual Conference after cancelling the original event due to COVID-19 impacts. This one-day event provided opportunities for professional development, member engagement and importantly, in-person networking following a challenging year.



LGAT Annual Conference 2020.





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