

Mayor Handbook



Local
Government
Association
Tasmania

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Welcome

This handbook has been prepared by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to provide you with important information about your role as mayor.

Throughout the document, we have included links to additional resources that provide more information.

It is important that this handbook is read in conjunction with the Councillor Handbook, and the Learning and Development Framework available online at learntolead.tas.gov.au.





About us

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) was established in 1911 and is the voice of local government in Tasmania.

The functions of the Association are to:

- Protect and represent the interests and rights of councils in Tasmania.
- Promote an efficient and effective system of local government in Tasmania.
- Provide services to member councils, councillors, and employees of councils.

We exist to serve every one of Tasmania's 29 member councils.

Our role is to support, promote, advocate for and represent the local government sector, so you're in the best possible position to serve your community.

Our advocacy work is guided by councils and we are an incorporated body under the [*Local Government Act 1993*](#).

Your council pays an annual subscription to be a member of LGAT, and we also earn income from sponsorships, events and procurement services.

We're stronger and more effective together.

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Your role

Congratulations on being elected as a mayor to represent your community.

Leading the council and community is an exciting and rewarding opportunity with significant expectations.

Expectations of a mayor

In local government, the mayor is required to work with councillors to make decisions.

This means you can't make standalone decisions and must work with and lead a team of councillors for the benefit of your municipality.

Your leadership role critically underpins the council's ability to make decisions.

A positive and professional working relationship between the mayor, general manager and councillors is an essential part of delivering positive outcomes for the community.

Mayors under the Local Government Act

Your role as mayor is defined in Section 27 of the [Local Government Act 1993](#).

The Act describes your role and emphasises the importance of the community and leadership components of your role.

There are several roles and responsibilities you need to perform as a mayor, both legislative and functional.

To give you an idea of the breadth of the role, below is a list of the responsibilities outlined in the Act:

- To act as a leader of the community of the municipal area.
- To carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office.
- To promote good governance by, and within, the council.
- To act as chairperson of the council and to chair meetings of the council in a manner that supports decision-making processes.
- To act as the spokesperson of the council.
- To represent the council on regional organisations and at intergovernmental forums at regional, state and federal levels.
- To lead and participate in the appointment, and the monitoring of the performance, of the general manager.
- To liaise with the general manager on the activities and performance of the council in exercising its functions and powers.
- To liaise with the general manager on activities of the general manager and the performance and exercise of his or her functions and powers in supporting the council.
- Any function imposed by an order under [Section 27A](#).

The role of mayor is complex and calls on a wide range of skills.

You also have the same functions as other elected members (e.g. voting at meetings), and must balance these two roles.

To assist you in carrying out your role, you may find it useful to develop your skills by undertaking professional development in areas like chairing meetings, negotiating and dealing with the media.

As part of our professional development program, we offer training in these areas and facilitate discussions with other mayors through the LGAT Mayor's Community of Practice.

Leading councils

In fulfilling your role as a leader, it's important to ensure you are well briefed on all issues of importance. It's also essential that you are visible and accessible to your community.

You can delegate duties to other elected members and your council may have a protocol covering when to enact the delegation of duties.

As a leader, you are expected to report to other councillors on a regular basis and in a timely manner, about relevant meetings, including the nature and content of any discussions and documentation.

There may be occasions when confidentiality may impact the degree of sharing.

Good governance within council

It is important as mayor that you model, support and promote good governance within your council.

Good governance gives the community confidence in its council and also in its decision-making processes.

It also enables councils to make decisions in a timely manner and ultimately ensures councils effectively lead and provide services to their communities.

More information on good governance can be found on the Office of Local Government's website in the [Good Governance Guide](#).

In addition, we have put together online training and development modules in the Learning and Development Framework (learntolead.tas.gov.au) with the Office of Local Government. This will be supported by face-to-face training opportunities throughout your term.

The online modules have a significant focus on different aspects of good governance.

Leadership is a personal quality that involves taking charge, taking responsibility, making decisions based on credible information, understanding the interests of the community, exercising good judgment, being fair and respecting others.

Mayors Handbook, State of Alaska.

Chairperson of council

The [Local Government \(Meeting Procedures\) Regulations 2025](#) outline essential requirements for the conduct and running of council meetings.

As chairperson, your role is to ensure that council meetings are conducted in an efficient manner.

You should be familiar with the items listed on meeting agendas through regular briefings with the general manager and other staff (when the general manager considers it appropriate).

Note: Regulation 10 of the [Local Government \(Meeting Procedures\) Regulation 2025](#), requires that the agenda be prepared by the general manager.

The mayor and councillors cannot give instructions on whether business is listed on an agenda or the form of its presentation.

To support effective meetings, it is important that you:

- Ensure that meetings are conducted in accordance with the [Local Government \(Meeting Procedures\) Regulation 2025](#).
- Ensure the council's meeting procedures policy, the codes of conduct and any other relevant guidance is observed.
- Ensure all councillors are treated fairly and equitably and are encouraged to participate in discussion. The mayor should set the tone of the meeting (fair, firm and friendly).
- Ensure that the meeting keeps to time and is orderly.

- Guide councillors, as necessary, to ensure the efficient and practical handling of formal business.

In chairing a council meeting you coordinate and lead the council by keeping it focused on key functions and responsibilities.

It is essential to reiterate that councillors should not become involved in matters of administrative, operational or managerial detail. These are matters for the general manager.

The same principles apply to chairing council committees or other meetings, such as those with the community.

More information on council meeting procedures can be found on the [council meetings and decisions webpage](#).



KEY OBLIGATIONS

When chairing council meetings



Put motions to the vote and announce the vote.



Stick to the agenda.



Do not allow debate until a motion has been moved and seconded.



Consider a procedural motion before anything else.



Consider a point of order as soon as it is called.



Advise council when it is acting as a Planning Authority.



Vacate the Chair if moving or seconding a motion.

As well as the Regulations, some councils adopt additional provisions to cover council decision-making processes.

These may include council policies and guidelines. From the point of view of the community, councils are expected to be open and transparent in the way they conduct business.

Spokesperson and representative

The Act identifies the mayor as spokesperson for the council and as representative for the council on regional organisations and at intergovernmental forums.

This role involves:

- Issuing press statements and giving media briefings on council decisions and policies.
- Responding to media enquiries on behalf of council.
- Representing the council at local government policy forums and workshops.
- Representing the council at regional meetings of councils or such other bodies as the council resolves to participate in.
- Representing the council at official meetings with community and other groups.
- With the knowledge and approval of the council, meet with political and business leaders, preferably in the company of the general manager.

As the spokesperson for the council, you are expected to be articulate and considered in presenting information on behalf of the council.

Regular briefings are likely to be an important tool in order to be informed and ready to comment on issues at any time.

It is also important that you develop and maintain good working relationships with elected officials in other spheres of government.

On occasions, these meeting tasks may be delegated to other elected members or the general manager.

Your council may have a policy covering when and how delegations work.

Mayoral entitlements

Under the [Local Government Act](#), mayors are entitled to certain benefits.

In providing these entitlements to mayors, councils are required under Schedule 5 of the Act to develop a policy in relation to the reimbursement of expenses incurred.

These policies will typically cover entitlements for expenses - for example travel, phone or childcare.

The [Local Government \(General\) Regulations 2025](#) specifies the allowances payable to councillors, mayors and deputy mayors.

The allowances payable are set out in Schedule 4 of the Regulations.

The Office of Local Government has also developed an [information sheet](#) in relation to councillor allowances. These are reviewed each year and updated by October.

Media

As the mayor, you are the council's spokesperson and will receive media enquiries.

The media are an essential part of our democracy and help to get your council's message to a broader audience.

Enquiries may come as a request for comment, questions or a request for interview on radio, tv or in print from a journalist or producer.

Always ask for the questions in writing along with a deadline for your reply. This will give you time to consider your response and seek advice from council staff.

The journalists or editors may contact you via the council or directly.

As part of our professional development training, we offer you media training. Please keep an eye on our [events page](#) for when we will next be offering this training.

In the meantime, these tips should be helpful in preparing to work with the media:

- Speak to your council communications team.
- Spend time preparing for media interviews.
- Think about what kind of questions you may get and map out answers to questions you receive.
- Be informed about the subject matter, audience and format before you begin.
- Identify two or three key messages.
- Rehearse your responses.
- Build relationships with media outlets and journalists.
- Remember that you represent the council, not yourself.
- Try to relax and enjoy it!

From the point of view of the community, councils are expected to be open and transparent in the way they conduct business. It is important for councils to have comprehensive policies to demonstrate that their dealings and deliberations are consistent, fair, reasonable, and equitable.

The General Manager

You are responsible for leading the appointment and monitoring the performance of the general manager.

This role is one of the most important functions you will perform.

General managers are appointed by the council for up to five years on a performance-based contract.

Contracts of employment with the general manager should define the relationship between the council and general manager and contain provisions dealing with accountability¹.

In 2024, the Tasmanian Government developed a framework, via the introduction of the *Local Government (Appointment and Performance of General Managers) Order 2024* (Ministerial Order), for the recruitment and performance assessment of general managers within local government.

The Order introduces:

- guiding principles
- robust requirements in respect of conflicts of interest in the recruitment of general managers
- requires councillors to obtain professional support; and
- establishes an annual performance review cycle based on agreed success measures.

The Ministerial Order is supported by the following information sheets, which provide details of how the order must be followed:

- Information Sheet – General Manager Recruitment
- Information Sheet – General Manager Performance Monitoring.

You can find out more about the Ministerial Order on the [Office of Local Government website](#).

To support councils in implementing the Ministerial Order, LGAT developed a guide and toolkit for general manager recruitment and performance monitoring that provides a range of practical tools councils can utilise.

These are available on the [Member Portal](#).

Your relationship with the general manager

The relationship between the mayor and the general manager is fundamentally important to a well-performing council.

[Section 27 \(h\)](#) of the Act gives you the responsibility of liaising with the general manager in relation to council activities.

This includes the performance of its functions as well as the activities of the general manager and the performance of their functions and powers in supporting the council.

It must be supported by a strong working relationship between the mayor and the general manager so that the mayor is informed about key activities of the council.

¹ LGAT have developed a template contract for general managers for use by member councils which is available on our [Member Portal](#).

Functions of the general manager

Section 62 of the [Local Government Act](#) prescribes the functions of the general manager.

The general manager of a council has the following functions:

- To implement the policies, plans and programs of the council.
- To implement the decisions of the council.
- To be responsible for the day-to-day operations and affairs of the council.
- To provide advice and reports to the council on the exercise and performance of its powers and functions and any other matter requested by the council.
- To assist the council in the preparation of the strategic plan, annual plan, annual report and assessment of the council's performance against the plans.
- To coordinate proposals for the development of objectives, policies and programs for the consideration of the council.
- To liaise with the mayor on the affairs of the council and the performance of its functions.
- To manage the resources and assets of the council.
- To develop and maintain a workforce development plan that addresses the human resourcing requirements of the council.
- To perform any other function the council decides.

The general manager may do anything necessary or convenient to perform their functions under this or any other Act.

[Section 63](#) of the Act prescribes the following power to the general manager in relation to council staff.

The general manager of a council may:

- Appoint persons as employees
- Allocate duties to employees
- Control and direct employees
- Suspend or dismiss employees.

The general manager develops human resource practices and procedures in accordance with council policies to ensure employees receive fair and equitable treatment without discrimination.

[Section 64](#) of the Act also gives the general manager power to delegate to another employee of council his or her functions in writing.

[Section 65](#) of the Act places a responsibility and obligation upon the general manager to ensure advice is properly given by either themselves or other employees of the council.

The Section provides:

- A general manager must ensure that any advice, information or recommendation given to the council is given by a person who has the qualifications or experience necessary to give such advice.
- A council is not to decide on any matter which requires the advice of a qualified person without considering the advice unless the general manager certifies in writing that the advice was obtained and considered in providing general advice to the council.

Relationship between the mayor and the general manager

It is crucial that you develop a sound working relationship with your general manager to ensure the council operates effectively.

To discharge the role effectively, it is necessary that you have regular and open dialogue with the general manager.

There should be a discussion on matters to go before the council to ensure you understand and can effectively manage the business of the council.

The mayor and general manager should also review and discuss any issues in relation to the implementation of council decisions and requests.

Relationship between a council and the general manager

Whilst the functions of the general manager in the Act indicate an extent of autonomy in the role, this does not mean that the general manager should undertake their functions in isolation from the council and councillors.

It is necessary for the council to be kept appropriately informed, and in a timely manner, on all relevant matters.

What is relevant is dependent on the reporting arrangements agreed by the council and the general manager.



Monitoring your own performance

As a mayor, it is important to take the time to assess and track your own performance.

This can range from self-reflection, through to informal or formal feedback from your general manager or your fellow councillors.

Things to consider might include:

- How well are you managing your statutory functions?
- Your leadership style and approach
- How you can strengthen processes and outcomes for your council
- What have you been doing well, and how can you maintain that?

Professional development

We offer a wide range of professional development opportunities throughout the year.

These online and in-person sessions provide further insights into your role, the functions of councils, advocacy and leadership development opportunities.

For more information, please refer to the calendar of events [on our website](#).

Not long after you commence in the role, we will invite you to the LGAT Mayor's Community of Practice, which will provide you with an opportunity to share experiences, discuss the role and common challenges with your colleagues.



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Local Government Learning and Development Framework includes modules on:

- The roles and responsibilities of councillors
- Essential knowledge and skills for councillors
- Foundations of good governance.

For further information, refer to the [Learn to Lead website](#) or contact us at learntolead@lgat.tas.gov.au.

Conclusion

Congratulations on being elected as your community's mayor. It is both a challenging and rewarding role.

This handbook has been designed to give you some initial support, but it is no substitute for experience and asking questions.

As you get accustomed to your role, please feel free to reach out at any time with questions or concerns.

We will do what we can to support you.



KEY LEGISLATION

- [Local Government Act 1993](#)
- [Local Government \(General\) Regulations 2025](#)
- [Local Government \(Meeting Procedures\) Regulations 2025](#)
- [Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993](#)



Get in touch

We exist to support you as you work for your council and the community.



Our Member Portal

Designed to connect you with the information you need.
It hosts online tools, services and resources.

www.lgat.tas.gov.au/member-portal



Call us
anytime



Connect with us on social media to stay informed on the latest in local government in Tasmania.



Email us and we'll put you in touch with the right people.



Online learning,
networking and events.



Drop into our Hobart office or we'll see you at one of our in-person or online events.



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