
Communiqué

Premier's Local Government Council Meeting – 31 May 2018

The Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) met in Hobart on 31 May 2018 for the first time since the Government's re-election in March 2018.

The Premier, the Hon Will Hodgman, chairs the PLGC, which also includes the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Peter Gutwein, the elected members of the General Management Committee of the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) including the President, Mayor Doug Chipman, and members of the PLGC Officials Committee.

The PLGC provides an important forum for the Tasmanian Government and the local government sector to jointly identify, progress and oversee strategic initiatives for the benefit of the Tasmanian community.

The PLGC's agenda continues to be dynamic and wide-ranging, reflecting the increasing scope and complexity of initiatives and services that contemporary Tasmanian councils are expected to deliver.

2018 Council Elections

A strong theme of this PLGC meeting was the ongoing commitment by both levels of government to deliver a range of practical initiatives in the lead-up to the statewide October 2018 council elections that will enhance the sustainability of the local government sector.

The PLGC was briefed on work that is underway to support the elections, including through candidate information sessions and public awareness campaigns.

The Premier and Minister for Local Government personally committed to using appropriate public engagement opportunities to promote the important role of local government, raise awareness of the forthcoming elections, and encourage voter and candidate participation.

Tasmanian Councils in the 21st Century

Looking beyond the 2018 elections, the PLGC discussed the lessons learnt from the recent feasibility studies into council voluntary amalgamations and shared services arrangements. The PLGC also discussed the debate occurring within the sector, both in Tasmania and nationally, on long-term sustainability in the context of councils' changed and increased roles and expectations.

The Minister noted that feasibility studies conducted for most councils during the State Government's first term indicated significant opportunities through new shared service arrangements. While some progress is being made, the implementation of new shared service

arrangements was acknowledged as slow. Shared service arrangements have the ability to redirect back office resources to customer facing services that directly benefit communities.

LGAT agreed to put forward to its members options for undertaking a body of work that would establish an evidence base in relation to the key features and attributes of efficient, effective and sustainable Tasmanian councils in the 21st century. LGAT will report back to the PLGC at its next meeting.

Waste Management

The PLGC discussed significant changes in international recycling commodity markets as a result of recent policy decisions of the Chinese Government. These changes have already flowed through to local kerbside recycling contracts and are placing budgetary pressures on councils.

The PLGC noted that LGAT is taking a leadership role and is scoping a potential feasibility study for a whole of local government sector approach to waste management. The PLGC also noted that Minister Archer intends to convene a round table discussion with stakeholders on these issues.

Review of Councillor Allowances

The PLGC discussed the findings and recommendations of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission's (TIC) report into councillor allowances, and noted that the Minister has written to councils and councillors seeking submissions in response to the report.

In its report, the TIC concludes that the current level of councillor allowances is financially sustainable and acceptable, and has recommended only minor changes to the existing allowances regime.

The PLGC noted that the Minister will consider all submissions from the sector before making a decision on allowances. Any changes to allowances will be captured in regulations and take effect following council elections in October 2018. The PLGC tasked LGAT and the Local Government Division (LGD) to develop a scope for the TICs recommended review of the methodology for calculating base councillor allowances, including the categorisation of councils and disadvantage factors, and to identify effective ways of attracting councillors from more diverse backgrounds.

Code of Conduct Review

The Minister briefed the PLGC on the Tasmanian Government's response to the elected member Code of Conduct Review.

The Government is proposing improvements to the Code of Conduct framework, which will include legislative amendments, changes to the Model Code and administrative and process improvements. The changes are designed to increase the sector's ownership of, and commitment to, the framework and improve the efficiency of complaints processes, including through the early dismissal of trivial complaints.

It is intended that legislative and Model Code amendments will be implemented ahead of the October 2018 statewide council elections, subject to the State Government's legislative agenda and other Parliamentary priorities.

The Review was the subject of substantial consultation. The PLGC noted that the sector will be given a further opportunity to provide input to legislative amendments and changes to the Model Code before they are introduced to the Parliament.

Other Topics

The PLGC noted action and progress on a range of other matters of importance to the local government sector, including:

- progress on the current review into the application of competitive neutrality principles to council-owned camping facilities;
- development of 'Local Provision Schedules' following recent changes to planning legislation and the introduction of the *Residential Housing Supply Bill 2018*;
- relevant legislative changes;
- key economic development initiatives and indicators; and
- community concerns over the proposed sale of Anglican Churches and Cemeteries, and actions being taken by the State Government and local government to respond to these concerns.

The PLGC is scheduled to meet again in December 2018. Further information on the PLGC is available on the LGD website: www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government/plgc.