
Communiqué

Premier's Local Government Council Meeting – 9 May 2019

The Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) met in Launceston on 9 May 2019. The Premier, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, chairs the PLGC, which also includes the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, the elected members of the General Management Committee of the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) including the President, Mayor Doug Chipman, supported by 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. This was the first PLGC meeting of 2019 and will be followed by a second meeting later in the year.

The Premier and Minister acknowledged this meeting was the last PLGC for some members. The Premier and Minister thanked Mayor Doug Chipman for his contributions as President of LGAT and acknowledged the effective role he has played in representing the local government sector.

The contributions of Mayors Mick Tucker, Daryl Quilliam, Jan Bonde, Councillor and former Mayor Tony Bisdee, and Alderman Heather Chong were also acknowledged. The Premier wished those well who were seeking re-election to the General Management Committee.

The PLGC also acknowledged that it was Andrew Paul's last PLGC meeting, and thanked him for his valued contributions throughout his role as General Manager of Clarence City Council since 2003, to the local government sector more broadly, and as an Official supporting the PLGC.

The key focus areas for discussion at the 9 May meeting included:

- Historical and future Tasmanian demographic trends and their implications for future population planning and local government sustainability;
- Stakeholder views and emerging reform themes arising from the Government's major local government legislation review; and
- Ongoing development of an evidence base to establish key characteristics of effective 21st century councils.

Local government legislation review

The PLGC discussed the significant progress of the Tasmanian Government's Local Government Legislation Review. The Review provides the opportunity for the State Government, local government sector and other stakeholders to create a 21st century regulatory framework for local government in Tasmania.

The PLGC noted the success of the Review's initial consultation process, which attracted significant engagement from the public, local government sector and other stakeholders. 382 submissions were received and the advertising campaign reached over 186,500 Tasmanians. This is in addition to over 7,000 people who have engaged with the Review's webpage. It is evident that Tasmanians are highly invested in shaping the future of local government.

The PLGC discussed a number of themes areas, including potential electoral reforms, red-tape reduction, and increasing community engagement, transparency and accountability in the local government sector.

Population growth trends

Population growth and settlement planning has emerged as a highly topical issue on the policy agenda at both the state and federal level. Tasmania's strong economy has increased the attractiveness of the State as a place to live and work, but this also creates challenges such as congestion and housing supply.

The PLGC discussed emerging challenges and opportunities identified in two pieces of recent analysis focusing on both historical trends and future growth projections at the local government area level.

The *Population Trends in Local Government Areas from 1993 – 2017* paper, prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) reveals that, overall, Tasmania has experienced the majority of population growth in the South of the State, particularly in the Greater Hobart area, and flat or declining population growth in some smaller, isolated regional council areas.

The Department of Treasury and Finance presented to the PLGC on the key points from local government area population projections. Councils projected to have the highest rates of growth are located in the South and central North, around the population centres of Hobart and Launceston. Councils projected to experience the largest percentage declines are located in more regional areas, further from the current population centres. These projections clearly indicate that, over the next 25 years, there will be an increasing mismatch between current council boundaries and where people live, in addition to the significant changes that have already occurred since 1993.

The PLGC discussed the significant opportunity the current prominence of the population debate at the national level holds for advancing Tasmania's priorities around addressing the State's population challenges and opportunities. The State Government and local government sector will work collaboratively to maximise opportunities, including attracting investment and jobs for sustainable growth in both urban and regional areas. Both levels of government will also seek to attract Australian Government support and investment for Tasmania's population and economic growth agenda.

Amalgamations, Shared Services and 21st century councils

The 9 May 2019 meeting was the PLGC's first since the electors of Tasman voted against the proposal to amalgamate with Sorell Council. The Premier and Minister noted their disappointment with the result, but reiterated the Government's longstanding policy position, which is that local government reform stands the best chance of succeeding when processes are voluntary, transparent, and have high levels of support from local communities.

LGAT briefed the PLGC on the status of its efforts to establish an evidence base in relation to the key features and attributes of efficient, effective and sustainable councils in the 21st century, including its proposal to develop a series of pilot projects.

The Premier advised the PLGC that the State Government continues to work in partnership with the Clarence City, Glenorchy City, Hobart City and Kingborough Councils to progress the establishment of the *Greater Hobart Act 2019*. The Act will provide a legislative framework for the Tasmanian Government and the four councils to collaborate and support achieving outcomes that enhance liveability, connectivity and operational efficiencies across the municipal areas. Work on the legislation is now largely complete, with the Bill currently before the Legislative Council.

The PLGC also noted progress on a range of work being driven by councils in the North and North West of the State to further develop their shared services arrangements for ICT, legal and regulatory and waste management services. The PLGC agreed that these kinds of new and innovative service models will need to be closely considered more broadly as part of the local government sector's response to long-term sustainability challenges, particularly given the changed and increased roles and expectations of councils.

Waste management

The PLGC recognised the high level of ongoing interest in waste management policy at the local, state and national levels, particularly in the context of recent international developments that have affected how councils manage waste and recycling.

The PLGC noted a range of developments at the national and state levels to address the significant emerging policy challenges around waste management, including:

- the endorsement by federal and state and territory environment ministers in December 2018 of the *National Waste Policy* (NWP), which will provide a framework to guide action on waste management and resource recovery by governments, industry and the community;
- the joint work program of the Australian Government, states and territories and the Australian Local Government Association to develop an implementation plan for the NWP, which is expected to be considered by environment ministers later this year; and
- the Tasmanian Government's 50 percent funding contribution for the Local Government feasibility study into a State-wide waste management arrangement, and its commitment to release a draft Tasmanian Waste Action Plan for public consultation by the end of June 2019.

Other Topics

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

- a range of issues raised in relation to dog management and the operation of the *Dog Control Act 2000*;
- the complexities involved with management of coastal erosion on Crown Land and the need for clearer policy on intervention when risks to private and public infrastructure are present;
- the release of the Tasmanian Government's Policy Statement on the application of competitive neutrality principles to public camping facilities; and
- an update on the implementation of the Tasmanian Government's planning reforms.

The PLGC will meet again in the second half of 2019. Further information on the PLGC is available on the LGD website: www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government/plgc.