

## Department of Communities Tasmania

GPO Box 65, HOBART TAS 7001, Australia  
Web: [www.communities.tas.gov.au](http://www.communities.tas.gov.au)



Local Government Legislation Review Project Team  
Local Government Division  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
GPO Box 123  
HOBART TAS 7001  
LGAReview@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Local Government Legislation Review Project Team

**Subject: Communities Tasmania Submission to the Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the future of the legislative and regulatory framework for Tasmania's Local Government. Communities Tasmania is committed to creating strong, active and inclusive communities. A submission to the review is attached.

The Department is interested in the progress of the review and looks forward to reading the Directions Paper. We would welcome the opportunity for further consultation in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ginna Webster".

Ginna Webster  
Secretary

12 March 2019

Att: Communities Tasmania submission

## **Communities Tasmania input into the Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework**

Communities Tasmania is a Tasmanian Government agency established on 1 July 2019, which comprises the divisions of:

- Housing, Disability and Community Services (HDCCS);
- Children and Youth Services (CYS); and
- Communities, Sport and Recreation (CSR).

Communities Tasmania aims to create strong, active and inclusive communities. It focuses particularly on population groups that experience multi-faceted disadvantage, or barriers to social participation. This includes children, young people and their families; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex Tasmanians; migrants and refugees; older persons; people experiencing family violence; those requiring housing assistance; and people living with disability.

Local Government is a critical partner in supporting communities by building and maintaining community-based infrastructure, providing a range of services to vulnerable Tasmanians, supporting wellbeing and promoting social participation and inclusion. This is reflected in section 20 of *Local Government Act 1993*, which includes that a council has the function of providing for "...the health, safety and welfare of the community".

As outlined below, Communities Tasmania is heavily invested in raising the awareness of, and supporting the wellbeing needs of all Tasmanians. We would welcome any further opportunity to promote these broad objectives.

Areas where local government has an important role are provided below. These may not necessarily be relevant to the *Local Government Act 1993* and this review, but may influence discussion throughout the review, particularly in the areas of Council Governance and Powers and Democracy and Engagement.

### **Child and Youth Wellbeing**

The Tasmanian Government has a particular focus on social participation and inclusion for children and young people. A Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework was released in 2018 which defines wellbeing across six domains, including being loved and safe, having material basics, being healthy, learning, participation and having a positive sense of culture and identity.

The primary aim of the framework is to ensure that everyone, in all parts of Tasmania's service system and in the broader community, has a strong, common understanding of child and youth wellbeing. It also provides a strong foundation for building the partnerships and collaboration required to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania.

Built upon this foundation of a common understanding and language of wellbeing, a Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework is being developed for release in 2019, which will measure the overall success of efforts to improve child and youth wellbeing in Tasmania.

## **Affordable Housing**

In early 2019, the Tasmanian Government will release the *Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023* (Action Plan 2). Action Plan 2 will support working with the Affordable Housing Working Group under the Hobart City Deal to review planning mechanisms that address higher density accommodation and promote affordable housing in new developments to determine those best suited to the specific Tasmanian regulatory, social and economic context.

It is recognised that planning is outside the scope of the review, but there may be opportunities to promote the role of local government in building communities that provide safe, stable and affordable housing as part of the council's legislative function.

## **Social Participation and Inclusion**

Communities Tasmania, through its CSR programs, develops and supports opportunities for all Tasmanians to participate in community life, sport and recreation. It focuses on activities that:

- Build community capacity: leading whole-of-government policy initiatives, programs and services to enhance and strengthen cultural, economic, social and political outcomes for the Tasmanian community, and
- Enhance access and participation: delivering a range of whole-of-government policy initiatives, programs and services aimed at increasing opportunities for all Tasmanians to be engaged in community life, sport and recreation.

The importance of social participation and inclusion, particularly sporting and recreational activities, is recognised in a range of whole-of-government strategies, such as *Strong Liveable Communities – Tasmania's Active Aging Plan 2017-2022*.

Local Government is a key partner for the State Government in its efforts to build communities that promote participation in community life, sport and recreation. It is considered important to ensure that this role is reflected in the functions of a council.

More broadly, it is important to ensure that Local Government is accessible as an institution to people of all ages and cultures and for individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Communities Tasmania hasn't reviewed all of the sections of the Act to consider the impact on accessibility of local government but would appreciate ongoing consideration of this issue throughout the review.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement is a key way to ensure that local government understands and meets the needs of its community and improves community health and wellbeing.

Communities Tasmania supports the use of a range of approaches and mechanisms including new and emerging technology to make local government information accessible. Information should be provided in a range of ways and be accessible for a broad range of people.

For example, the voice of young people, especially those who are vulnerable or isolated, is often not heard by policy makers or service providers.

In 2017, the Tasmanian Government released the *Youth at Risk Strategy*. Action 26 within the Strategy seeks to improve youth participation through the development of innovative consultative practices to provide these young people with a voice. During 2018, the youth at risk project team

met with almost 400 young people across Tasmania to gain their feedback on how Government and service providers could better engage and consult with young people.

The feedback obtained from consultations with young people informed the development of a draft document *Youth Matters – A practical guide to increase youth engagement and participation in Tasmania*. This document has been designed to provide policy makers and service providers with a range of resources and tips to enable them to better engage with young people who utilise their services. It will also provide young people with more opportunities to have their ideas heard and understood by government and service providers, during the design and review of youth services.

Basic principles for local government engagement with Tasmanian communities could include:

- Local government should provide and receive information in a range of different ways where possible, including electronic;
- Communication should be accessible for as much of the community as possible, including to people living with disability, and those who have difficulty reading; and
- Personal information should be protected.

It may not be appropriate to embed these principles in the *Local Government Act 1993*. They may, however, be relevant to how the Act prescribes how meetings are held and advertised or how petitions, polls and public meetings are managed.