



14 August 2019

Local Government Legislation Review
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

Via email: lgreview@dpac.tas.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

RE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION REVIEW

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Government's reforms directions paper, relating to your review of Tasmania's Local Government legislative framework.

Font PR own and publish three local community newspapers – the Derwent Valley Gazette (published weekly); and the Sorell Times, and the Tasman Gazette (published monthly).

Our feedback primarily relates to Part C of the Reform Directions Paper; how Councils connect with their communities, particularly in relation to compulsory reporting and public notification requirements.

Our view is that the numerous requirements under *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) for public notices including but not limited to Annual General Meetings, elector polls and calls for public submissions to be published in daily newspapers is outdated, out of step with many local government policies, and is a hindrance to the effective communication by Councils with their local communities.

Local newspapers such as ours are arguably much more widely read in their local communities than relevant daily newspaper – for example, our research indicates that one out of every two households purchases the Derwent Valley Gazette each week, and two out of three Valley residents read it weekly.

Local Councils only have limited advertising budgets and as a result of the current legislative requirement, are often unable to financially justify also advertising locally after fulfilling their legislative requirements to advertise in a daily newspaper.

We are of the view that it remains important for local governments to advertise in newspapers, as they are and will remain an important communications tool (in either hardcopy or electronically) and are an important Newspaper of Record for historical purposes. However, we strongly support the removal of references to 'daily' when referring to newspapers in the following sections of the Act:

- S31(1)(a)
- S60A(2)(a)
- S61(3)
- S72(2)(d)
- s72B(3)(b)
- S101(1)(b)
- S105A(2)(b)
- S109C(1)
- S118(a)
- S137(5)
- S139A(3)
- S157(2)(a)
- S178(4)(a)
- S189(2)
- S195(4)
- S214C(3)
- S275(3)
- S304(2)
- S307(4)(b)

Furthermore we strongly support additional changes to the below sections of the Act:

- S72B(2) - remove 'daily' and 'or other prescribed newspaper'
- S269(1) – amend to 'no less than two months prior to closing day" the electoral commissioner is to cause notice of an election to be advertised prominently in a newspaper circulating in the relevant municipal area.

Making the above changes would provide Councils with additional flexibility to ensure that local residents and ratepayers are well informed and kept up to date on the latest information.

The current regulations in this space are in our view, too rigid and do not provide local authorities with the flexibility to notify their local community about important things in the best possible way.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on these changes and please do not hesitate to contact us should you require additional detail or wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,



Brad Stansfield
Partner

P 03 6223 3333

