



ANITA DOW MP
MEMBER FOR BRADDON

Local Government Legislation Review Project Team
Local Government Division
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Via email: lgreview@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Project Team

On behalf of the Tasmanian Labor Party, please find attached a submission regarding the proposed Reform Directions.

Kind regards

Anita Dow
Member for Braddon
Shadow Minister for Local Government

30 September 2019

Submission by the Tasmanian Labor Party to the Review of the Local Government Act Reform Directions Paper Phase Two

Tasmanian Labor welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework Reform Directions Paper Phase Two*.

We look forward to reading the submissions of councils, members of the community and other stakeholders to understand better the implications of some of the proposals outlined in this paper for different councils around Tasmania.

The current review provides Tasmania with an opportunity to consider what local government should look like for the next thirty years. If we are willing to be imaginative, to listen to our councils and our communities, and be bold enough to implement a vision, this is Tasmania's chance to build the local government sector of the future.

Local government's strengths lie in its close connection to the community, its management of key community assets such as parks, streets, sports grounds and community buildings, and its capacity to quickly respond to specific needs of the community. Its challenges might be found in its limited resources compared to other levels of government, its relative lack of economies of scale, and its relatively limited policy brief.

So how can we build on these strengths, and seek to address some of the challenges? Labor believes reform should be guided by the following principles:

- As many people as possible should be encouraged to participate in local government.
- Councils should engage and work alongside their communities to the greatest extent possible.
- Councils should always be accountable to their communities.
- Councils should have sufficient scope and resources to address the specific needs of their communities.

The *Directions Paper* provides very little detail related to the proposed changes. Tasmanian Labor believes there is a need for more information to be made available to ensure the sector and the community is very well informed about the proposed changes.

Tasmanian Labor provides brief comment on the following reform directions.

When it comes to mayoral elections Tasmanian Labor supports 7A—the status quo—but notes concerns have been raised by councils that there is a need for mayoral candidates to have had previous experience in local government prior to standing as mayor.

Tasmanian Labor holds the view that Reform 8 Electronic Voting should only be implemented if the security of electronic ballots can be demonstrated absolutely and shown to have been

successfully implemented in other Australian jurisdictions. We have strong reservations about moving to electronic voting.

Tasmanian Labor will be interested in the views outlined in submissions related to Reform 13 because of the possibility it will deter some genuine candidates from seeking election. Concern has been raised with Tasmanian Labor regarding Reform 12 and the introduction of a pre-nomination training package and that fact that this may also deter candidates from seeking election.

Reform 22 also risks deterring people from seeking election because they do not possess skills which can be easily learned following their election, such as an understanding of meeting procedures. A preferable alternative to establishing 'core capability requirements' would be to guarantee prospective candidates there will be support available to help them learn the ropes of being a councillor. Tasmanian Labor has also received feedback from the sector regarding the need for more support for council staff and elected representatives when incidences of conflict or misconduct occur at a council. The provision of support services outside of the framework of the Code of Conduct should be explored as part of this review.

Tasmanian Labor will also be interested in the feedback received in submissions in relation to Reform 29 and the referral of councils to the Economic Regulator by the Minister regarding the setting of rates.

Tasmanian Labor will be interested to hear from communities and local government about the proposed changes to the roles of the Local Government Director and council general manager. We also look forward to comment from the local government sector about the proposed Community Engagement Strategies and their role in many of the reforms outlined in Part D. Consideration also needs to be given to the development of guidelines for councils, particularly smaller councils with less resources, around a number of these proposed initiatives.

More detail on what specifically is being proposed would be welcome for a large number of the other proposed reform directions.

Tasmanian Labor also urges the Government to think more deeply about the future role of local government, and how it can be empowered to help Tasmania tackle issues around economic development, employment and health.