



22 February 2019

Local Government Legislative Review  
Local Government Division  
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To Whom It May Concern

### **Local Government Legislative Review**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation. As Metro Tasmania's operations require a high degree of interaction with the local government sector, the opportunity to provide input into the development of reform options is welcome. Metro was attended an industry consultation session on February 21, and this submission both reflects and supplements the input provided at that forum.

#### Context

Metro is a state-owned company that delivers services under passenger transport service contracts with the Secretary of the Department of State Growth. Metro is Tasmania's largest passenger transport service provider, operating a fleet of 220 buses in and around Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

As noted in the Discussion Paper, local government is responsible for over 14,000 kilometres of Tasmania's road network. Metro operates bus services across 13 local government municipalities, and regularly interacts with the various councils to ensure passenger transport services can be delivered safely, efficiently and reliably. To support this interaction, Metro has established memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with seven major councils, covering the majority of Metro's operating area. These MOUs establish frameworks for cooperation by setting out the roles and responsibilities of each party. However, the MoUs are not consistent across the councils, and do not create any enforceable rights.

For the purposes of this submission, Metro has identified four issues for consideration in the Review, which broadly relate to one or both of the following aspects of the Review's scope:

- Provisions that support efficient and high-quality council operations and service delivery
- Council governance and decision-making practices, including options for community engagement, representation, and democratic participation

#### 1. Consultation with public transport planners

As Tasmania's largest provider of passenger transport services, Metro is often synonymous with public transport, and, as such, it seems reasonable to assume that if no consultation around planning decisions have been undertaken with our business, it is unlikely that key

determinants of future service provision – such as road widths, turning arcs, sight lines and the provision of on-street infrastructure (bus stops) – will be overlooked.

Whilst acknowledging that the Passenger Transport team at State Growth are transitioning to a more active posture as the system's manager, and will represent an alternative source of advice, the importance of local government fostering early and considered planning for public transport cannot be overstated as our settlements grow and extend.

## 2. Funding of public transport infrastructure

Metro is acutely aware that the current legislative framework around the provision of on-street infrastructure is less prescriptive than the equivalent legislation in other jurisdictions.

With Metro serving as a 'funder of last resource', with very limited means, and a high level of dependence on co-operation from local government around the in-ground and on-road infrastructure required to support a bus stop, a significant percentage of the Tasmanian community face hurdles to accessing public transport.

Metro will be operating a fully accessible fleet from mid-2021, heightening the imperatives around ensuring the necessary investment by both local and state governments keeps pace with the improvements in vehicle access – it is not evident to us, at this time, that all stakeholders in this critical area are equally committed to achieving this outcome.

## 3. Process for installing public transport infrastructure

Metro's networks in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie result in our organisation having an interface with a third of the councils across the state. Inconsistency in processes across councils increases the complexity inherent in managing this large number of relationships, although we acknowledge improvement following the introduction of state-wide planning scheme. Nonetheless, the small variations in practice between Councils significantly increase Metro's transaction costs, and results in fewer infrastructure installations than would otherwise be achieved.

## 4. Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act

Metro's experience suggests there is a widespread and fundamental lack of understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act as it applies to infrastructure related to public transport. Whilst we recognise the challenges some Councils face in attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff, and managing contractors, there are instances where this results in non-compliant works being undertaken, representing a poor outcome for both ratepayers and local community members whose access to passenger transport is contingent on the provision of suitable infrastructure.

If you require further information, please contact Chris Breen, General Manager Business Improvement Services on [chris.breen@metrotas.com.au](mailto:chris.breen@metrotas.com.au) or 03 6233 4201.

Yours sincerely



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