



Postal: PO Box 3199 West Hobart, Tasmania 7000
Email: climatetasmania@gmail.com
Telephone: 0427 355 951
Web: www.climatetasmania.org

Local Government Legislation
Review
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001
(Delivered by email to: lgreview@dpac.tas.gov.au)

5 Sept 2019

**Submission: Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework –
Phase 2**

Climate Tasmania is a group of experienced specialists which seeks to provide timely, independent and authoritative advice to Tasmanian business, government and community leaders on climate change and appropriate policy responses.

As the consequences of global climate change have become increasingly to the fore, and while the Paris Agreement has obliged nations to play their part in combatting it, all three levels of government need to be fully and cooperatively engaged in responding appropriately within their respective domains. *Climate Tasmania's* views on the local governance framework is focussed on this important context.

Local councils necessarily play multiple roles in addressing climate change, including their responses to extreme weather events such as summer wildfires and flooding. Indeed, being at the coal face local government arguably plays a greater role than does state government in these respects and their collective performance in carrying out both mitigation and adaptation responsibilities therefore impacts significantly on the state's overall climate performance.

Our comments particularly relate to the pre-existing statutory requirement for each Tasmanian councils to prepare a Strategic Plan for its relevant municipal area – outlining how the council aims to forward plan into the future in light of likely scenarios that will emerge. Councils are also required to prepare an Annual Plan and this must state the manner in which the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan are implemented.

To date Tasmanian councils, left to their own devices, have developed widely variable levels of sophistication in recognising 1) the urgency of climate change and 2) the extent to which a rapidly changing climatic conditions and catastrophic

weather events may impose high levels of risk and disruption on council infrastructure and on the community services that they provide. At least one has developed a draft Climate Change Strategy and three to date have declared 'Climate Emergency' declarations.

However, these responses have been at best ad hoc and scattered and we are concerned that Tasmanian Councils as a whole are failing to adequately develop suitable policy frameworks in the face of climate disruption affecting Tasmanian communities. We believe a more integrated and rigorous approach would be to deal with climate change planning through the instrument of their statutory Strategic Plans in this regard.

Further, we submit that it is in the interests of both councils and state government for local government to share a common framework and coherence in developing their climate change strategies so that they may more easily communicate and mesh in with each other.

Recognising that a key aim of this Governance Review is to limit layers of red tape and random directions from state government, we simply argue that the issue of climate change will have such immense bearing on Council's triple bottom line accounting it is in the community's best interest that some level of broad coherence should be provided for – albeit without imposing undue impositions on councils to develop their own strategic plans and policies that are important to their particular matrix.

One way of assuring better coordination in this regard is for Councils to be advised by state government to frame their forward strategic planning in accordance with the [UN Sustainability Development Goals](#). Many corporate and government bodies here and around the world have by now chosen to utilise this seventeen-point framework for this purpose because it provides a convenient template, common language and a set of structured policy compartments around which any corporate body may frame their planning.

The state government currently has no statutes in place to mandate agencies of state government to deal with climate change strategically and comprehensively. Recognising that Tasmanian councils have differing levels of resourcing we believe that this guided approach would facilitate much better coherence and would ensure that councils do address these important policy considerations without restricting their freedom to plan in accordance with local conditions and priorities pertinent to the respective municipalities.

We believe this Governance Review offers an ideal window of opportunity to facilitate a much tidier response to this rapidly emerging contingency that is likely to impact on the triple bottom line of every Tasmanian municipality in years to come. We recommend this unifying approach because it dovetails into the Review's key objectives:

- **It supports greater innovation, flexibility and productivity in the sector to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the services that councils provide to the Tasmanian community.**
- **It minimises red tape and administrative burden on councils, business and the broader community.**
- **It would enhance accountability and transparency across the sector; and increases democratic and community engagement, participation and confidence in local government.**

Yours sincerely,

**Margaret Steadman
on behalf of Climate Tasmania Board of Members**