

**PREMIER'S
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COUNCIL**

Thursday 31 May 2018, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm
Premier's Reception Room, level 11, 15 Murray Street

Meeting Minutes

Apology	PLGC Members	
	Will Hodgman MP	Premier (Chair)
	Peter Gutwein MP	Minister for Local Government
	Ald Doug Chipman	President, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT), Mayor, Clarence City Council
	Ald Ron Christie	Acting Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council
	Cr Daryl Quilliam	Vice President, Mayor, Circular Head Council
Apology	Cr Jan Bonde	Mayor, Central Coast Council (proxy for Cr Steve Martin until after local government elections)
	Cr Christina Holmdahl	Mayor, West Tamar Council
	Cr Tony Bisdee	Mayor, Southern Midlands Council
	Cr Mick Tucker	Mayor, Break O'Day Council
	Ald Heather Chong	Clarence City Council
	PLGC Officials	
	Andrew Paul	General Manager, Clarence City Council
Teleconference	Sandra Ayton	General Manager, Central Coast Council
	Martin Gill	General Manager, Meander Valley Council
	Dr Katrena Stephenson	Chief Executive Officer, LGAT
	Dion Lester	Policy Director, LGAT
Apology	Kim Evans	Secretary, Department of State Growth (DSG)
Apology	Ruth McArdle	Deputy Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)
	Alex Tay	Director of Local Government, Local Government Division (LGD), DPAC
	Sean Terry	Deputy Chief of Staff, Premier's Office
	Rick Dunn	Senior Adviser, Minister Gutwein's Office
Apology	Luke Murphy-Gregory	Senior Policy Analyst, LGD, DPAC

	Dianna Marston	Policy Analyst, LGD, DPAC (Secretariat)
	Guests	
	Wes Ford	Deputy Secretary, EPA, Department Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
	Bob Rutherford	Deputy Secretary, Industry & Business Development, DSG (proxy for Kim Evans)
	Brian Risby	Manager Planning Policy Unit, Department of Justice

Welcome

The Premier welcomed participants to the first Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) meeting for 2018 and acknowledged the strong and constructive working relationship between the State Government and local government.

A recent example is the agreement that was reached between the State Government, the Local Government Owners Chief representative and TasWater to improve water and sewerage services in Tasmania. The PLGC were advised of the great opportunity to work together to improve the sustainability of local government through the October local government elections.

The PLGC noted that Sue Hickey and Steve Martin are no longer members of the PLGC, as they have taken up roles in the State Government and the Australian Senate respectively. Ald. Ron Christie is Acting Lord Mayor and will attend in Ms Hickey's place.

Cr. Jan Bonde will attend future PLGC meetings as a proxy for Steve Martin until a replacement member is elected to this position on the PLGC, following council election in October 2018. The elections for this position will be held after the local government elections in October to prevent having to repeat elections for the LGAT General Management Committee position.

The PLGC noted apologies and guests attending the meeting.

Agenda Item 1: Minutes – PLGC meeting 14 December 2017

The PLGC endorsed the draft minutes of the 14 December 2017 PLGC meeting as a true and accurate record and noted the five actions arising from the meeting had been completed. The following four actions were completed by LGD:

- the Director of LGD (the Director) wrote to all councils reminding them of their obligations with regard to managing conflicts of interest and spokesperson provisions;
- LGD is exploring opportunities to utilise Victoria's 'Know your council' website and is in early discussions with Local Government Victoria regarding options for a Tasmanian website;
- the Local Government Relief and Recovery Policy was initially included on the agenda for the PLGC meeting. However, following an update at the PLGC Officials meeting, the Officials agreed it did not warrant inclusion on the final PLGC agenda; and

- LGD has established a Steering Committee, Reference Group and a Terms of Reference to review the application of the competitive neutrality principles to council-owned camping facilities.

The Minister wrote to the Australian Government Treasurer raising the issue of the fixed threshold of \$1,000 for deductible allowances for candidates who incur expenses when contesting a local government election. In response, the Australian Government Treasurer advised that, at this stage, a review of the legislative framework that provides for the threshold is not being considered.

Agenda Item 2: Review of the PLGC Protocol Agreement

The PLGC agreed to review and refresh the PLGC Protocol to ensure it remains fit for purpose and accurately captures the joint strategic objectives of the State Government and the local government sector. The PLGC acknowledged the review is timely following the recent State Government election but noted that any changes are likely to be minor. The PLGC agreed the revised Protocol Agreement is to be provided for the PLGC's formal endorsement at the December 2018 meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Preparation for October 2018 Statewide elections

The PLGC noted the practical initiatives being planned and undertaken by both levels of government ahead of the October 2018 elections to support the principles endorsed by the PLGC at the December 2017 meeting. Alex Tay informed the PLGC that the Australian Local Government Women's Association (Tasmania) had written to the Minister requesting support to increase the participation of women candidates in the election.

The Premier advised the PLGC that he and the Minister were well placed to help promote the upcoming elections during public engagements, such as Regional Cabinet Meetings. The Minister and the Premier committed to publicly promoting the PLGC's principles, raising overall awareness of the elections and encouraging voter and candidate participation.

The Minister noted the successful delivery of the Glenorchy City Council and Huon Valley Council election information sessions. Dr Katrena Stephenson noted that the sessions, including King Island Council, were a collaborative effort and were well attended. Dr Stephenson advised the PLGC that LGAT has provided new material on the LGAT website for local government candidates.

Agenda Item 4: Learnings from voluntary amalgamations and strategic shared services studies

The PLGC noted that all amalgamation and shared services studies had been completed. The PLGC discussed several common themes that have emerged across all shared services and amalgamation studies with respect to barriers and opportunities for reform. Concerns for local employment opportunities is commonly cited as a barrier to amalgamations or sharing services,

but there is also recognition that optimising 'back office' arrangements is critical to better meeting demand for new or improved customer-facing services.

The PLGC noted work that is occurring to realise the benefits of shared services across Tasmania but acknowledged the rate of progress is slow in most regions. The PLGC noted that discussions are occurring within the sector itself, and not just in Tasmania, on what changes need to occur to ensure increasing demands and expectations of communities can be met.

The Minister reaffirmed the State Government's clear policy position on voluntary amalgamation and that it will not force mergers. However, it is incumbent on the sector to adapt to changing community demands and be open to reform where it is in the broad interests of regions and their communities. The PLGC acknowledged the amount of work completed over the last few years and that there is a clear opportunity for the sector to leverage the knowledge gathered about how improve the quality and cost effectiveness of services.

LGAT agreed to put forward to its members options for undertaking a body of work that would establish an evidence base in relation to the key features and attributes of efficient, effective and sustainable Tasmanian councils in the 21st century. LGAT will report back to the PLGC at its next meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Statewide Planning

Brian Risby updated the PLGC on the implementation of the statewide planning reforms. The PLGC acknowledged the significant amount of work required to implement the planning reform and the ongoing challenges for councils. Mr Risby advised PLGC the completion of Local Provision Schedules (LPSs) is variable across councils. Communication with councils is ongoing and specific programs are being developed to target councils to help them update their LPSs.

The PLGC noted the State Government's priority is to deliver on its commitment to establish the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and other planning reforms. A key action, arising from the recent Housing Summit, is the introduction of legislation in the Autumn session of Parliament to 'fast-track' zoning changes for identified surplus State Government land identified as appropriate for residential use to accelerate the supply of affordable housing. The PLGC discussed the issues around the post approval process that affected the release of housing properties onto the market, such as the process for utility connections.

Agenda Item 6: Waste management/recycling

The PLGC noted the update on waste management and recycling, including recent major developments in global markets which are having implications for Tasmanian councils. Wes Ford advised that, following the recent Meeting of Environment Ministers, a new action plan for the State would be developed, in part as a result of the significant changes in the recycling industry resulting from China's 'National Sword' policy. This will include reducing waste, increasing the use of materials and components of waste that can be re-used or recycled, reviewing Australia's recycling capacity and increasing the demand for recycled products.

The PLGC discussed the budget implications for councils with changes to kerbside recycling and the different approaches in each region. It was acknowledged that while regional approaches to waste management worked well, a statewide strategy has the potential to achieve economies of scale in contracts and reduce costs.

The PLGC noted that LGAT is taking a leadership role and scoping a potential feasibility study for a whole of local government sector approach to waste management. The PLGC noted Minister Archer will be convening a round table discussion with stakeholders to assist with the understanding of, and development of responses to, the current issues, barriers and opportunities.

Agenda Item 7: Director of Local Government report

The PLGC noted the Director's report and LGD's role in supporting the upcoming local government elections by participating in candidate information sessions and through regulatory activities that support confidence in democratic outcomes.

Alex Tay informed the PLGC that LGD will engage a consultant to manage the annual council Consolidated Data Collection (CDC) in its entirety and to simplify the process. Mr Tay said local government performance reports, in the form of theme-based snapshots, are being developed by LGD. Mr Tay updated PLGC on LGD's preliminary discussions with the Victorian *Know your council* website team which is currently reviewing the website and who have provided high-level indicative costings for a Tasmanian version of the website.

Mr Tay provided the PLGC with an update on the activities in other jurisdictions, including the experience of rate capping and the comprehensive review of the local government Act in Victoria which will be finalised later in 2018 with the introduction of a new, principles-based legislative framework. The PLGC acknowledges the merits of undertaking a similar 'roots and branches' review of the Tasmanian Local Government Act, given it is around a quarter of a century old. The PLGC noted the findings from a study conducted by KPMG on Victorian rural and regional councils which identified a number of trends and issues that are very similar to those which are observable in Tasmania.

Agenda Item 8: Camping facilities and competitive neutrality issues

The PLGC noted the progress of the review of competitive neutrality principles and council-owned camping facilities including several issues raised during the meeting. A Steering Committee has been established with representatives from DPAC, the Department of Treasury and Finance (Treasury) and DSG, which has met on several occasions. A Stakeholder Reference Group has also been established, which met in March 2018 and again on 23 May 2018, where it considered a draft options paper prepared by Treasury.

Treasury is currently developing a Policy Options Paper based on initial feedback from the Reference Group, which will be used as the basis for further consultation with stakeholders. The PLGC was advised that the 30 June deadline may be extended to ensure concerns from all stakeholders are fully considered. However, any changes need to be in place prior to the commencement of the summer tourism season. The PLGC heard concerns from the local

government members about the implications of the strict application of the principles of competitive neutrality without recognition of differing markets within each municipality. Alex Tay advised the PLGC that many of the issues raised during the PLGC meeting had been discussed by the Steering Committee. It was noted that there is a lack of clarity around how to identify which activities are Significant Business Activities and the process to conduct public benefits test.

Dr Katrena Stephenson questioned what research and actions had been done on emerging tourism markets, such as the self-contained RV market, and what is required to support it. LGAT requested feedback at next PLGC meeting.

Agenda Item 9: Review of councillor allowances update

The PLGC noted that the review of councillor allowances had been completed by the Tasmanian Industrial Commission (TIC) and that the findings and recommendations had been provided to councils and councillors for feedback prior to the implementation of any changes to allowances. In its report, the TIC concludes that the current level of councillor allowances is financially sustainable and acceptable, and has recommended only minor changes to the existing allowances regime.

The PLGC noted that the Minister will consider all submissions from the sector before making a decision on allowances. Any changes to allowances will be captured in regulations and take effect following council elections in October 2018.

The PLGC tasked LGAT and LGD with developing a scope for the review of the methodology for calculating base councillor allowances, including the categorisation of councils and to identify effective ways of attracting councillors from more diverse backgrounds prior to the October 2018 elections.

Agenda Item 10: Code of conduct review

The PLGC noted the update on the review of the code of conduct. The Minister advised the PLGC he is currently considering recommendations for amendments to the framework, which were informed by significant and close consultation with the sector.

The PLGC noted adjustments emanating from the review will be designed to enhance the sector's ownership of and commitment to the framework, as well as improve the efficiency of complaints processes, including through the early dismissal of trivial complaints.

The Minister advised the PLGC that the updated code of conduct framework is intended to be in place ahead of the October 2018 statewide council elections, subject to the State Government's legislative agenda and other Parliamentary priorities. This will require a combination of administrative and legislative changes to give effect to agreed recommendations. The sector will, therefore, have a further opportunity to provide input to legislative amendments or changes to the model code before they are brought before the Parliament.

Agenda Item 11: Legislation update

The PLGC noted the legislative agenda for LGD. Alex Tay informed the PLGC a Miscellaneous Amendments Bill will be drafted later in the year to introduce a suite of minor amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*. The PLGC was advised that the draft Local Government (General) Amendment Regulations 2018 has been released for formal consultation and LGAT has provided feedback. The PLGC discussed the practical implications of changes which include introducing a proposed single electoral expenditure limit of \$10,000 for a candidate and removing conditions of advertising.

Agenda Item 12: Snapshot of economic development

Bob Rutherford presented the *Snapshot of economic development* to the PLGC which highlighted Tasmania's strong performance in key economic indicators such as visitor spending. Mr Rutherford provided an overview of a sample of the State Government's new commitments and initiatives to support economic growth in Tasmania.

Dr Katrena Stephenson advised the PLGC that LGAT has organised a new group comprised of industry representatives and Tasmanian and mainland local government employees who will meet in relation to digital technology and opportunities. The group will look at digital innovation which enhances council functions and which delivers economic and community outcomes.

Agenda Item 13: Communiqué approval

The PLGC discussed the draft communiqué and agreed that PLGC Officials will prepare a final version for the President and the Premier to approve prior to publication.

Agenda Item 14: Other business and meeting close

The PLGC agreed to cancel the September PLGC meeting due to the local government elections in October.

The PLGC noted the concerns around the sale of Anglican Church properties and the State Government's commitment to ensure people's rights with respect to cemeteries are maintained or strengthened where appropriate through potential amendments to the *Burial and Cremation Act 2002* and/ *Burial and Cremation Regulations 2015*. The PLGC noted that individual councils are providing support to communities within their municipalities to ensure their constituents' concerns are heard.

Meeting closed 4.02 pm

Actions

Agenda Item	Actions From PLGC Meeting on 31 May 2018	Who	When	Complete
2	Review the PLGC Protocol and seek formal endorsement at the next PLGC meeting.	LGD to draft, then review by LGAT	Out-of-session by 13 November PLGCO meeting.	Yes
4	Report options for undertaking a body of work to establish an evidence base in relation to the key features and attributes of efficient, effective and sustainable Tasmanian councils in the 21 st century.	LGAT	10 December PLGC meeting.	Ongoing
8	Provide feedback on the State Government's strategic approach to engaging tourism markets and what is required to support them.	Tourism Tas or DSG	10 December PLGC meeting.	Yes
9	Develop a scope for the review of the methodology for calculating base councillor allowances, including the categorisation of councils and to identify effective ways of attracting councillors from more diverse backgrounds.	LGAT and LGD	Before October 2018 elections.	Yes