

To:

[Consultation, LG](#)

Subject:

Local Government Amendment (Targeted Reform) Bill 2025 - Consultation

Date:

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Introduction

Aspects of the Local Government (Targeted Reform) Amendment Bill 2025 appear to extend state control and political influence into Tasmania's local councils under the pretext of improving governance. That would be an egregious threat to fair and effective governance.

The Bill risks silencing independent, community-focused representatives and replacing genuine accountability with ministerial discretion and bureaucratic oversight. It undermines local democracy - the level of government most directly connected to Tasmanians.

1. Centralised Power Disguised as "Accountability"

The Bill's proposed powers for the Minister to issue Performance Improvement Directions, appoint Temporary Advisors, and intervene based on a vague "reasonable belief" of governance issues give the State an unacceptable level of control over independent councils. These provisions lack clear evidentiary thresholds, transparent justification requirements, or independent review rights. They enable politically motivated interventions against councillors or councils that question state priorities or hold dissenting views.

This is not accountability - it is executive overreach cloaked in reform language.

A simple and lawful safeguard would address the Government's stated concern: Any ministerial intervention should be limited solely to cases of proven criminal conduct, corruption, or serious breaches of the law - established through due process and independent investigation. That would ensure that genuine wrongdoing can still be addressed without opening the door to political misuse or ideological interference.

2. Threats to Democratic Representation

Tasmanians elect local councillors to represent their communities - not to be subject to direction or intimidation by the State. The Bill risks creating a culture of compliance, where councillors are reluctant to challenge government narratives for fear of being targeted under vague "misconduct" or "governance failure" provisions. Terms such as "bringing a council into disrepute" are dangerously broad and open to abuse. Ministerially appointed "advisers," paid for by councils, amount to a financial penalty for political independence. The proposed "training and qualification" requirements, if state-controlled, risk being used as ideological filters rather than capacity-building tools. This structure discourages honest, community-minded people from standing for council - exactly the opposite of what Tasmania needs.

3. Misuse and Corruption Risk

The lack of safeguards invites misuse. Without independent review, public transparency, or clear legal limits, these powers could be used to:

Pressure councils into aligning with state agendas;

Undermine outspoken councillors through selective intervention;

Shape local narratives by controlling data, training content, and "performance" metrics.

Tasmanians are right to fear that this Bill, if passed unamended, will allow political influence to masquerade as governance reform - enabling targeted suppression rather than ethical improvement.

4. Constructive Alternatives

True reform should focus on transparency, fairness, and consistency - not control. The following principles should guide any amendment.

- Limit state intervention strictly to proven criminal conduct or corruption, confirmed through independent legal process;
- Require independent oversight and publication of all ministerial directions or interventions;
- Define "governance failure" and "misconduct" precisely to prevent selective application;
- Ensure councillor training and conduct systems are independently developed, not politically designed;
- Guarantee councils are not financially penalised for imposed oversight measures;
- Strengthen protections for councillors acting in good faith or raising legitimate concerns about state (bias political) influence and interference.

Conclusion

The Local Government (Targeted Reform) Amendment Bill 2025 dresses central control in the language of accountability. It risks undermining the independence of democratically elected local representatives and silencing genuine community advocacy.

Tasmania's councils are not extensions of the State - they are the foundation of democracy closest to the people. Accountability mechanisms should be based on evidence and law, not political discretion.

I urge the Government to withdraw or substantially amend this Bill to ensure that only proven criminal conduct or corruption - not subjective judgment - can justify intervention. Anything less weakens both democracy and trust in governance.

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