

Hon. Kerry Vincent MP

Minister for Local Government

Box 123

Hobart TAS 7001

26 March 2025

By email: lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

RE: Submission regarding the discussion paper on the proposed legislative changes to support delivery of the Tasmanian Governments Local Government Priority Program 2024-26.

Dear Minister Vincent,

Local Government Professionals Tasmania (**LG Pro Tas**) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission on the current discussion paper on the proposed legislative changes to support delivery of the Tasmanian Governments Local Government Priority Program 2024-26.

As you are aware, LG Pro Tas is the leading voice for Local Government professionals in Tasmania providing leadership, professional development, and representation in the pursuit of excellence.

Our members are a community of professionals aspiring to shape the sector and make a difference in their Local Government career.

LG Pro Tas would like to re-iterate that the Board of LG Pro Tas has actively participated in the Future of Local Government Review consultation. It is clear from our consultation with members that Council officers can and do see both opportunities and challenges that come with any reform process. It is also clear that Council Officers want a seat at the table to have their voices heard as part of the consultation process. Too often local government professionals lead the change on the ground but are consulted as an after thought rather than at the beginning of the reform process.

LG Pro Tas provides the following feedback on Strategic Priorities 1 and 2 for your consideration. For ease of understanding our comments are grouped under each of the priority areas.

1. Legislating the good governance principles

Supported.

2. Introducing serious councillor misconduct provisions

Serious misconduct needs to be properly defined and more detail on the process and who incurs the costs should be part of any legislative drafting.

3. Broadening performance improvement direction provisions

A clear definition in relation to what would be considered not to be a minor breach is required in the legislation. A clear definition of what equates to a serious and material failure is also required. Increasing the use of PID's whilst being an early intervention tool also brings additional costs to Councils and this should be acknowledged.

4. Introducing temporary advisors for councils

Any legislation should be drafted so that it is clear if the advisors recommendations are binding. This is important if a Board of Inquiry would be an outcome of an advisors report.

5. Clarifying work health and safety obligations

Supported

6. Mandating council learning and development obligations

Support in principle – noting the additional workload being required by a General Manager. If the mandatory learning was refused by a Councillor or a Councillor refused to participate in the development of a learning and development plan with the Councils General Manager what would be the sanction? It is important to understand that the General Manager is employed by the Council and any legislation should ensure that all rights, responsibilities and actions should the requirements not be met be clearly set out in legislation. If this was to be implemented then General Managers should be provided with the relevant training to ensure they have the skills required to undertake this specific requirement.

7. Introducing a contemporary role statement and a charter for local government.

Supported – noting that any Local Government Charter needs to be consulted with the sector including specific consultation with Local Government Professional Tas.

8. Improving the strategic planning and reporting frameworks

Supported in principle. Noting that Workforce Development Plans are complex documents that can take more than 12 months to develop properly. Any legislation should be drafted to specifically include the minimum requirements of any workforce plan.

9. Improving consistency in data collection and reporting methodologies

Supported in principle – noting that any performance data should be discussed and consulted on with the sector before being instructed by the Minister. Councils have a range of data collection methods and any changes could see significant costs incurred in some instances. We would suggest that Council Officers are consulted via Local Government Professionals as part of this process.

10. Enhancing transparency of information in council rates notices

Supported

11. Mandating internal audit for councils

Supported in principle - noting that this function may need to be outsourced in smaller councils which will add additional costs to operational budgets.

I note that the proposed reforms will significantly increase the workload of senior council officers not least of which council General Managers and Chief Executive Officers and this should be given consideration when looking at the practical implications of the suggested reforms.

Furthermore, I bring your attention to the fact that these proposed reforms in practice put increased responsibility onto council General Managers and Chief Executive Officers to manage the behaviours and Development of Elected Members. The reality of this, is that council General Managers and Chief Executive Officers are being asked to manage the performance of their bosses. There are very few if any industries where this would occur. As part of the implementation process it is critical that significant planning and support is given to how council General Managers and Chief Executive Officers will be supported to implement the proposed reforms.

I hope and expect that LG Pro Tas will play an active role in the reform process as a key stakeholder in the Local Government Sector. LG Pro Tas once again thanks you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the discussion paper.

Should you wish to discuss the above further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0448 037 064.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on these important draft amendments

Yours Sincerely



Kristen Desmond

President

LG Professionals Tasmania