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To:
Subject:
Date:

[REDACTED]
lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

Submission - Discussion Paper on Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances
Friday, 7 November 2025 11:59:46 PM

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity here to make a submission on the **Discussion Paper on Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances** and accept it as having been written in one session on a mobile phone without word-processing or the assistance of AI. It most likely contains a high degree of errors.

The discussion paper invites feedback (page 4) on three questions concerning Councillor Numbers and Allowances. The questions together with my responses and recommendations are provided below:

Q. Should we consider any strategies/guidance for council decision making where a quorum cannot be maintained?

A. Yes.

Q. Should it be mandatory for councillors' existing superannuation equivalent payments to be directed into a nominated superannuation fund?

A. Yes.

Q. Should the methodology and ongoing review framework for councillor allowances and numbers be embedded in legislation?

A. Yes.

Having read the **Discussion Paper on Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances** while it does not seek any further response to the reduction in capacity of 60 councillors across Tasmania available to serve on council and a 14% increase in remuneration, I state the following for the record.

It is redolent from reading, that the above decision has been settled upon by the Tasmanian State Government. It too, will be supported by council responses drafted by their officers as a whole, but likely less so, by individual councillors should they choose to write.

The report was referred to me by chance. Your office was kind enough as to make it

available to me in my preference of PDF format, subsequently making it available on the website and fixing the other supporting 'dead' links. Being an amateur, it didn't go unnoticed that officers took the time to answer my first question on the 22 October.

Unfortunately, a question from 27th on role, responsibilities and workloads of councillors remains unanswered due to the staffing shortages in the office of Local Government.

It is now clear to me that the councillor numbers and a question of remuneration is not 'out for feedback' which would account in some way as to why question of mine went unanswered such as this:

"Secondly, is there anyone suggesting that offering \$52,953 versus \$47,347, would attract a noticeably 'higher quality candidate' in the October 2026 Local Council Elections?"

While the consultation period has now closed, if time allows, I would still appreciate a word from your office where I asked on the 27th about vote distortions (voter number distortion something the report seeks to reduce) from high profile 'superstar' or 'celebrity' candidates drawing large numbers of votes as follows:

... where the report touches on the strength of democracy by votes received as I too note Hobart has a councillor elected on 428 votes and Launceston by 503. However, conversely in Hobart, two of their colleagues received in excess of 4,000 votes and Launceston has one over 3,000 and one over 6,000. If it was about votes and representations, arguably, one or two less of these candidates by chance (Tasmania had over ten candidates in the 3,000 to 7,000 category in 2022 election) would give arguably more votes to the remainder and have the same increased representation or even more than these proposed reforms might bring by eliminating 3 'low' vote councillors by a significant margin?

While the report didn't look at past challenges with existing councillor numbers, inevitably there are going to be times when it will be found that the larger councils (Clarence, Hobart and Launceston) should probably have kept their 12 councillors.

I also wrote again (22nd October - as yet, unanswered due to staff shortage) on the costs and personal liabilities of the 124 published Local Government Code of Conduct Determination Reports, 20% of which relate to one southern council of which one particular councillor was involved in seven matters.

The report notes that a candidate was elected to a Tasmanian council one 17 votes or another or a mere 0.98% of total votes. How different is the outcome likely to be - an alternative 'high-quality candidate' attracted by an additional \$6000 per annum?

The report stresses Tasmania has the highest per capita councillor number (except NT) but

quote that even achieving this reduced model in NSW, the councillor dissatisfied with the remuneration is at 81% (p.6).

The report suggesting that by lowering the personnel to the 'right' number (p.4 & p.6) and redistributing the left-over allowances to those remaining 'to recognise the growing complexity of elected representative roles' (p18).

I'm not convinced it in itself would attract more 'diverse candidates' or 'high quality candidate' possessing 'improved professionalism' (p.4)

This report sells the concept of a cost-neutral exercise for the constituents at the same time attracting future candidates who will be required to undertake reforms such as more 'compulsory councillor education' (p.8) and 'stronger sanctions for poor behaviour' (p.4).

By moving from past representatives with the right number of quality candidates be in a position to fulfil those other roles and responsibilities that can only be filled by councillors such as committees and this is to be followed by the council "amalgamation program not precluding a review before the end of 2026" (p.6).

I can't see how or if the 14.2% increase would in any way deliver both the 'right' number (p.4 & p.6) and 'high quality candidate' for the October (p.4) 2026 elections (p.7) with improved professionalism (p.4). And for 'right number' - that is fewer members increasing output for the 14%.

The report states a per capita to mainland numbers with Tasmania having the highest number (except NT) but quote that even with this model in NSW, 81% NSW were still dissatisfied with the remuneration (p.6). It indicates that the cost neutral exercise will attract future candidates who will be required to undertake reforms such as 'compulsory councillor education' (p.8) and 'stronger sanctions for poor behaviour' (p.4).

I note the report seeks the right number of quality candidates but will it fulfill those other roles and responsibilities that can only be filled by councillors such as committees. Then this is to be followed by the council "amalgamation program not precluding a review before the end of 2026" (p.6).

Do we know if the workload for each individual councillor would remain the same and if the 10% increase in allowance is to reward the increase in talent possessed by more qualified candidates required to contend with the added complexity of the role?

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

Robin Smith