

# Submission to the Exposure Draft: Local Government (Targeted Reform) Amendment Bill 2025

Submitted by:

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Date: November 2025

## Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Exposure Draft of the Local Government (Targeted Reform) Amendment Bill 2025. This submission is prepared from the perspective of a local government climate change practitioner with over 25 years of direct experience in adaptation and climate governance, working across multiple councils and regional programs in Tasmania.

Local government is on the frontline of climate change impacts—managing infrastructure, services, and community wellbeing under increasingly volatile conditions. Climate change is not a subset of community wellbeing; it is a systemic risk that intersects with every core council function, including governance, finance, asset management, land use planning, emergency management, public health, and community development.

The proposed reforms are strongly supported. They provide an opportunity to embed climate governance into statutory frameworks, strengthen accountability, and enable councils to deliver resilient, sustainable services. This submission advocates for explicit recognition of climate adaptation and resilience within the Bill and outlines practical mechanisms to operationalise this intent.

## Why Climate Governance Must Be Whole-of-Organisation

Climate change is not an environmental issue alone—it is a governance, financial, and operational challenge. Treating climate as a siloed or discretionary activity risks maladaptation, legal liability, and service failure.

The Australian Climate Service (ACS) Governance Technical Report (2025) identifies governance risk—including maladaptation and inaction—as a national climate risk. It calls for systemic reform to embed climate considerations across all decision-making processes.

From my experience, councils that integrate climate risk into **strategic planning, asset management, financial planning, and emergency management** are better positioned to protect community wellbeing and avoid escalating costs.

Professional work that I have completed a draft Climate Resilience Maturity Framework (CRMF) reflects this principle by mapping climate considerations across all council functions.

## Integration of 25 Years of Local Government Climate Work

Tasmanian councils have invested heavily in climate adaptation over the past two decades through:

- Council Climate Adaptation Plans (CCAPs)
- Carbon and Energy Footprints (CCEFs)

- Regional Climate Risk Assessments and Municipal Climate Profiles
- Collaborative programs such as NTARC and STCA initiatives

Please refer to Appendix 1 which provides a table summary of local government programs undertaken across and proactively by the sector since 2000.

This body of work provides a robust evidence base. The Reform Bill should ensure these investments are reviewed, integrated, and leveraged through:

- Standardised reporting frameworks.
- Performance indicators aligned with existing statutory instruments.
- Regional collaboration models that scale local action efficiently.

### Support for the Reform Bill

The Bill's emphasis on professionalism, accountability, and strategic governance aligns strongly with my professional findings, which have been presented most recently at the NESP ClimateAdapt Conference 2025 and Australian Climate Service's recommendations contained in the Technical Governance Report (Sep 2025) . Key elements supported include:

- Local Government Charter and Role Statement: Embed climate resilience as a core responsibility.
- Strategic Planning and Reporting Frameworks: Integrate climate risk into long-term planning and asset management.
- Mandatory Learning and Development: Build internal capability in climate governance.
- Internal Audit and Performance Monitoring: Create pathways for transparent reporting and continuous improvement.
- Early Intervention Tools: Temporary advisors and performance improvement directions can address governance challenges before they escalate.

### Recommendations

To strengthen alignment with Australian Climate Service's priorities and my professional findings, it is recommended to:

- Explicitly recognise climate adaptation and resilience in the Local Government Charter and strategic planning guidelines.
- Develop a Climate Accountability Framework via Ministerial Order, including:
  - Standardised reporting on emissions, adaptation actions, and resilience indicators.
  - Integration with existing statutory instruments (Strategic Plans, Annual Reports, Risk Registers).
- Adopt the Climate Resilience Maturity Framework (CRMF) as a statewide model for climate governance reporting:
  - Five-level maturity scale adapted from TCFD.
  - Enables benchmarking, transparency, and continuous improvement.

- Support regional collaboration models like NTARC through formal recognition and funding mechanisms.
- Embed climate governance metrics in internal audit and performance indicators.

## Climate Resilience Maturity Framework (CRMF): A Practical Solution

Developed by my professional roles and experience, the CRMF is a purpose-built resource created by councils, for councils. It operationalises whole-of-organisation climate governance by mapping climate considerations across all core functions—governance, finance, asset management, land use planning, public health, emergency management, and community wellbeing.

Key Features:

- Standardised maturity measures: Five levels from “None” to “Leader.”
- Integration with statutory instruments: Aligns with Local Government Act 1993 and Content of Plans and Strategies Order 2014.
- Efficiencies and cost savings: Avoids duplication, streamlines reporting, reduces liability exposure, and supports strategic investment.
- Alignment with ACS priorities: Reflects whole-of-organisation governance and anticipatory decision-making.

## Why Legislative Reform Matters

From professional roles and experience is directly observed and recognised that without reform:

- Governance risk will escalate, leading to maladaptation and inaction.
- Councils will face legal liability, reputational damage, and infrastructure failure.
- Communities will experience worsening service disruptions and social vulnerability.

With reform based on direct and lived experience of climate practitioners that understand the framing of climate within organisation local government:

- Climate governance becomes systemic, not discretionary.
- Councils gain tools, resources, and frameworks to manage risk effectively.
- Tasmania positions itself as a leader in local government climate resilience.

## Conclusion

The Local Government (Targeted Reform) Amendment Bill 2025 is a critical step toward modernising governance and embedding climate resilience across the sector. I strongly support the Bill and urge the inclusion of explicit climate provisions, supported by practical tools and frameworks that reflect 25 years of local government experience and regional collaboration.

I look forward to continued engagement with the Office of Local Government and the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ensure these reforms deliver on their promise: **a resilient, sustainable future for Tasmanian communities.**

## Appendix 1 – Tasmanian Local Government Climate Programs

The table below depicts the overwhelming engagement that the sector has proactively undertaken since 2000

Organisation	Program	Timeframe	Comment	# Tas councils
ICLEI / Aust Govt	Cities for Climate Protection	1999 - 2008	A national voluntary local government program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	6
Aust Govt / CCA	Local Adaptation Pathways	2008	A national competitive grant climate adaptation program	9
City of Hobart	Climate Adaptation Forum	2009	Unpack local governments role in climate adaptation	10
STCA	Regional Climate Change Initiative	2010 -ongoing	Coordinate climate action through a shared systems and processes	12
LGAT	Planet Footprint	2010	Carbon Footprint baseline for councils	28
TCCO	Tasmanian Coastal Adaptation Pathways	2016	Coastal Adaptation Planning	8
STCA RCCI, TCCO & LGAT	Regional Climate Change Adaptation Program	2012- 2015	Coordinate climate adaptation planning and establish a shared base line and resources	29
ReCFIT / TCCO	Climate Resilient Councils	2017	Assessment of Tasmanian council's climate governance	17
STCA RCCI	Sth Regional Coastal Strategy	2020	Coordinate a strategic approach to coastal hazards through across common themes and principles	10
CCA, NTARC & STCA	Statewide proposal for Local Government climate change action	2023	Endorsed by the Minister and included in the TCCAP to coordinate adaptation and mitigation and build capacity	29
LGAT	Local Government	2024	Implementation of Statewide proposal for Local Government climate change action	29
STCA RCCI	Southern Councils Climate Collaboration	2022 - 2024	Coordinate update of climate adaptation and mitigation and establish a shared base line	11
STCA & NTARC	Climate Change Information for Decision Makers	2022	Municipal climate profiles prepared by UTAS CFT across climate indices identified by councils	20
NTARC	Northern Councils Climate Collaboration	2022 (est)	Coordinate climate action through a shared base line and processes	8
NTARC	Corporate Climate Adaptation Plan	2024	Coordinate climate adaptation through a standard approach to identify climate risk and adaptation responses	8
NTARC	Corporate Carbon and Energy Footprints (2019 - 2023)	2024	Coordinate council's emissions reduction and capacity to prepare CCEF and actions	8

## Appendix 2 – Tasmanian Local Government Climate Snapshot

The table below provides a snapshot of the Tasmanian local government sector at Nov 2025.

Council	Climate Change Officer	Corporate Carbon & Energy Footprint	Climate Strategy or Strategic Plan Ref or Policy	Climate Risks Assessment / Adaptation Plan	Coastal Strategy
NTARC					
Break O Day	NRM Officer	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	Pending
Dorset	NTARC	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	Pending
Flinders Island	NTARC	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	Pending
George Town	NTARC	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	Pending
Launceston City	Dedicated role	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	Pending
Meander Valley	NTARC	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	N/A
Northern Midlands	NTARC	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	N/A
West Tamar	NTARC	✓	✓	2014 & 2024	Pending
					-
Burnie	-	-	✓	2014*	-
CCA					
					-
Central Coast	-	-	✓	2008 & 2014	-
Circular Head	Other duties	-	-	2008 & 2014	-
Devonport City	Other duties	-	✓	2008 & 2014	-
Kentish	-	-	✓	2008 & 2014	-
King Island	-	-	✓	2008 & 2014	-
Latrobe	-	-	✓	2008 & 2014	-
Waratah Wynyard	-	-	✓	2008 & 2014	-
West Coast	-	✓	-	2008 & 2014	-
STCA					
Brighton	Dedicated role	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Central Highlands	Not at this time	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	N/A

Council	Climate Change Officer	Corporate Carbon & Energy Footprint	Climate Strategy or Strategic Plan Ref or Policy	Climate Risks Assessment / Adaptation Plan	Coastal Strategy
Clarence City	Dedicated role	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Derwent Valley	Not at this time	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Glamorgan Spring Bay	Not at this time	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Glenorchy	Other duties	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Hobart City	Dedicated role	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Huon Valley	Dedicated role	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Kingborough	Dedicated role	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Sorell	NRM Officer	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓
Southern Midlands	Other duties	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	N/A
Tasman	NRM Officer	✓	✓	2014* & 2024***	✓