

**PREMIER'S  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
COUNCIL**

Wednesday, 16 December 2020, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm  
Premier's Reception Room, Level 11, 15 Murray Street, Hobart, 7000

**Meeting Minutes**

<b>PLGC Members</b>		
	Hon Peter Gutwein MP	Premier (Chair)
	Hon Mark Shelton MP	Minister for Local Government
	Cr Christina Holmdahl	President, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) General Management Committee (GMC), Mayor, West Tamar Council
	Cr Anna Reynolds	Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council
	Cr Ben Shaw	Vice President, LGAT GMC Mayor, Derwent Valley Council
	Cr Annette Rockliff	Mayor, Devonport City Council
	Cr Mick Tucker	Mayor, Break O'Day Council
Apology	Ald Brendan Blomeley	Alderman, Clarence City Council
	Cr Daryl Quilliam	Mayor, Circular Head Council
	Cr Geoff Lyons	Councillor, West Tamar Council
<b>PLGC Officials</b>		
	Nick Heath	General Manager, Hobart City Council
Apology	Sandra Ayton	General Manager, Central Coast Council
	Des Jennings	General Manager, Northern Midlands Council
	Dr Katrena Stephenson	Chief Executive Officer, LGAT
	Dion Lester	Policy Director, LGAT
	Craig Limkin	Deputy Secretary/Director of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)
	Mathew Healey	Director of Policy and Sector Performance (Local Government), Local Government Division (LGD), DPAC
	Luke Murphy-Gregory	A/Assistant Director, LGD, DPAC
<b>Secretariat</b>		
	Mitchell Cook	Policy Analyst, LGD, DPAC

<b>Ministerial support</b>		
	Mel Brown	Senior Adviser to Minister Shelton
	Rick Dunn	Senior Adviser to the Premier

## Welcome

The Premier welcomed participants to the second and final Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) meeting for 2020, and thanked those who had travelled to Hobart to attend the meeting.

The PLGC noted that this is Dr Katrena Stephenson's final PLGC meeting as she is moving to a new position with the Kingborough Council. The PLGC commended Dr Stephenson's achievements while Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT), including her advocacy on, and contribution to, the Local Government Legislation Review and her leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PLGC also congratulated Mr Dion Lester for his appointment to the CEO position.

The PLGC noted that the meeting will focus on:

1. the issue of the rating treatment of independent living units (ILUs);
2. Tasmania's recovery from the pandemic; and
3. improving the collaboration between the State Government and the local government sector, including through PLGC.

No guests were in attendance.

## Agenda Item 1: PLGC minutes from 2 July 2020

The PLGC noted that all five of the actions arising from the 2 July 2020 meeting have been completed and resolved to accept the draft minutes as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

## Agenda Item 2: Rating Treatment of Independent Living Units

The Premier updated the PLGC on the Government's efforts to reach a position on the independent living unit rating issue. The Government's intention is to provide certainty to stakeholders and to further advance discussions with stakeholders on the details of reform.

The Premier advised the PLGC that the Government is firmly of the view that any changes to the rating treatment of ILUs should not impact existing residents in those complexes, who have made financial and lifestyle decisions based on the current legislative setting. The PLGC noted that the Government's position is that the following parameters will apply to any reforms:

1. any new provisions relating to the rating of applicable ILUs will be effective from 1 July 2023; and
2. a lifetime rates exemption will be afforded to residents occupying ILUs at that date.

The Premier advised that the Government has also determined that the reforms should allow for differential rating treatment of ILU land that takes into account the contribution that ILU operators make to the community. The Premier explained that there will need to be a process to understand ILU models to inform the design of the differential rating treatment.

LGAT expressed concern about the rate revenue impact for councils of the Government's policy position and its parameters. The PLGC agreed that the Premier would write to LGAT setting out the Government's policy position which will then be considered by LGAT's Charitable Rates Steering Committee and General Management Committee.

The PLGC agreed that public communications on the Government's policy position will need to be managed carefully to avoid 'gaming' of the legislative changes.

Minister Shelton explained that now that the Government has determined the policy direction, it is his expectation that stakeholders will be more willing to engage in discussions about the policy detail and provide the information required to support policy development.

Nick Heath raised the issue of the rating treatment of University of Tasmania-owned properties. The Premier invited the Hobart City Council to write to him directly to initiate bi-lateral discussions on this issue.

### **Agenda Item 3: Tasmanian Recovery**

The Premier opened the discussion on Tasmania's Recovery by reporting the State's favourable stamp duty numbers and strong performance against Gross State Product and final demand.

The PLGC discussed the recent recovery and economic growth experience of Tasmanian councils. Sector representatives reported that impacts on and recovery of councils from COVID-19 are varied. Some PLGC members observed that councils with strong agricultural-, resource- and industrial-driven economies have experienced less economic impact than those who rely on tourism. The PLGC also heard that council revenue streams continue to be affected by rates freezes and social support decisions and the loss of TasWater dividends.

The State Government and the local government sector have been strongly focused on driving recovery and providing support in response to the pandemic. The Premier reflected on the positive impact that councils' social and economic support has had on Tasmanian communities. The Premier explained that the Government wants to do what it can to support the ongoing efforts of the local government sector in response to the pandemic.

The Premier proposed a \$5 million grant, over two years for the local government sector. It is envisaged that LGAT would have a strong role in working with its member councils to determine how best to distribute the grant funding to support the needs of the sector and the communities they serve.

Mayor Christina Holmdahl thanked the Premier for the proposed grant funding and agreed to bring the offer before the General Management Committee for consideration.

### **Agenda Item 4: PLGC Strategic Forward Agenda**

Minister Shelton opened the discussion by reflecting on the importance of a strong and collaborative relationship between the State Government and the local government sector. The State Government and the local government sector should always be finding ways to improve

how they work together, particularly in the context of recent challenges and those to come. Minister Shelton stated that the most immediate opportunity to achieve this is to reflect on and identify improvements to how the State Government and local government work together through PLGC.

The PLGC agreed that it should be focusing on shared strategic issues and having discussions on issues that might not otherwise receive dedicated focus. This would mean focusing less on updates and presentations on key State Government policy and legislative reforms. The PLGC agreed that it will need to identify and define issues for attention which will be the focus of meetings in 2021 whilst also finalising the proposed reforms to how the forum operates.

Mayor Christina Holmdahl explained that LGAT is supportive of changes to how the PLGC works but that LGAT would like the opportunity to develop a paper on how they would like to interact in the future and the issues to be focused on, which it will share with the State Government. Therefore, the PLGC deferred consideration of the recommendations in the paper.

The PLGC agreed that focusing on the State's response to climate change may be an opportunity for the 2021 work program. The PLGC also noted that there may be opportunities to improve how issues are progressed between meetings.

## **Agenda Item 5: Other Business and Meeting Close**

### *Local Government Legislation Review*

Mayor Ben Shaw expressed concern that the Review Steering Committee had not met since September 2020. Mr Limkin noted that there is significant work occurring in the background on what is a large and highly complex Bill. Going forward, the Review team will be working through some finer grained issues with the technical working groups ahead of the formal public consultation process on the Bill.

### *Tasmanian Audit Office Processes*

The local government representatives raised several matters regarding engagement with and the processes of the Tasmanian Audit Office. Councils have expressed concern about a recent request for information from the Office, given the timeliness in the lead up to the holiday period and nature of the request. Dr Stephenson raised concerns about the consistency of the Office's audit pricing; LGAT is charged the same as a small council for its audit and it is difficult to get the Office to justify the charges.

The PLGC agreed that the Auditor-General should be invited to attend the next PLGC meeting.

### *Fire Rehabilitation*

The PLGC discussed the rehabilitation of land where there are impacts due to Tasmanian Fire Service activity/operations. Mr Limkin explained that the Government is currently developing a policy to address this issue and LGAT is being engaged as part of this process.

### *Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council*

Dr Stephenson noted that there is sometimes a lost opportunity for the sector to assist in nuancing recommendations of State Government processes. For this reason, LGAT would like to ensure that the sector is fully engaged on PESRAC's recommendations before they are finalised. The Premier explained that there will be engagement early in the New Year to ensure the sector has line of sight on PESRAC's direction.

The Premier closed the meeting by thanking the local government sector for its engagement over 2020 and the contribution that all councils made to support Tasmania. The Minister expressed his appreciation for the sector's work in 2020 and the opportunity to partner closely in response to the pandemic.

**Meeting closed 4:00 pm**

### **Actions**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Actions From PLGC Meeting on 16 December 2020</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Complete</b>
5	Invite the Auditor-General to the next PLGC meeting.	Secretariat	Next meeting	
5	Place the Commission of Inquiry on the next PLGC agenda.	Secretariat	Next meeting	