

21 March 2025

Office of Local Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

By Email only: lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Submission - Targeted Amendments to the Local Government Act 1993

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Targeted Amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. This submission is made on behalf of Northern Midlands Council.

Northern Midlands Council are generally supportive of the changes, in particular the legislating of good governance principles.

We are concerned, however, with the lack of information regarding funding for the implementation of some reforms and the lack of clarity in some of the language used.

Additionally, we are wary of the word "mandate," as it seems to be a way of enforcing rules which lack mechanisms for accountability and enforcement.

Specific Feedback:

Strategic Priority 1: Lifting standards of professionalism, conduct, and integrity	
1. Legislating the good governance principles	Northern Midlands Councillors are largely in support of including guidelines related to good governance principles in the Act if there is an inclusion which ensure that these regulatory interventions are substantive and not merely symbolic, it is crucial to include mechanisms for accountability and enforcement.

P.O. Box 156
Longford Tas 7301
Telephone (03) 6397 7303
Facsimile (03) 6397 7331
www.northernmidlands.tas.gov.au

2. Introducing serious councillor misconduct provisions for councillors	Northern Midlands Councillors are generally in support of the introduction of these provisions to the Act and although Northern Midlands Council are aware that section 28ZL of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> already gives the ability to the Minister to remove an elected member from Council should they have been found to have breached the Code of Conduct 3 times; the meaning of serious misconduct and further information should be available for discussion of this before implementation.
3. Broadening performance improvement direction provisions	Northern Midlands Council suggests that this reform requires further information to be made available and recommends an operational guide released in relation to the changes to PIDs which will give guidance on what would trigger a PID.
4. Introducing temporary advisors for councils	Northern Midlands Council feels that having this support available could be of assistance to Councils but as the financial ramifications on a council will be great this needs to be fully explored before the implementation of this reform. As a Council who have recently experienced this type of model, the costs exceeded \$40,000 and there is an expectation that more expense is to be incurred through recommendations made by the Advisor.
5. Clarifying work health and safety obligations	Northern Midlands Council welcomes the expected clarification this reform will provide. However, we request that consideration is given to ensure that the language used is clear and provides clear guidelines which can be used when developing policies and procedures for the workplace.
6. Mandating council learning and development obligations	The introduction of mandatory learning and development is not fully supported by Northern Midlands Council. Northern Midlands Council have been attempting to establish training for elected members within the organisations and to date the costs associated with the training and finding qualified trainers in the state is proving difficult.

	If the State are mandating this training, they should be finding qualified cost-effective trainers or assisting in the costs. Furthermore, Northern Midlands Council are supportive of further training in relation to Council as a Planning Authority but feel that pre-election training should not be introduced in the currently suggested format. To date the reform shows that it would be detailed and include many areas related to governance but if a person is not elected it would be pointless.
Strategic Priority 2: Driving a high-performing, transparent, and accountable sector	
7. Introducing a contemporary role statement and a Charter for local government	Northern Midlands Council supports the formalising of the role of local government in the community. Northern Midlands Council considers that these guidelines already form the guidance by which the Council operates and forms part of the strategic plan of the Council already.
8. Improving the strategic planning and reporting frameworks	Northern Midlands Council already uses community wellbeing in their strategic planning and welcomes the introductions of statutory requirements to further guide them in this and report to the local community on the ways in which these priorities are being implemented. Northern Midlands Council values the importance of community engagement and financial and asset management obligations align.
9. Improving consistency in data collection and reporting methodologies	Northern Midlands Council hopes that this reform will see a more consistent approach in reporting which will allow the financials of smaller councils to be reviewed accordingly.
10. Enhancing transparency of information in council rates notices	Reform in relation to the inclusion of information on council rates notices needs further information provided prior to Northern Midlands Council giving support for this. It is noted that as with other proposed reforms utilising Ministerial Orders, the Minister for Local Government would be required to consult with councils before finalising and issuing the rates notice requirements.

11. Mandating internal audit for councils	Northern Midlands Council supports the concept of mandating internal audits for councils, however, feel there needs to be further information provided regarding the framework of this reform. The Northern Midlands Council has established a process for conducting internal audits across various departments for internal purposes. We seek further information on potential modifications or support needed to enhance this process.

If you have any questions or need clarification on this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Knowles OAM
MAYOR