



Carers Tasmania's Submission
to the Discussion Paper: Targeted
Amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*

March 2025



About Carers Tasmania

Carers Tasmania is the Peak Body representing the more than 87,000 informal carers (hereafter carers) in the state.

Carers Tasmania's vision is for an Australia that values and supports carers.

Our mission is to work to improve the health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security of carers and to ensure that caring is a shared responsibility of family, community, and government.

Our values drive everything we think, say, and do.

- **Carers first** – we listen to what carers need, commit to their desired action plan, and deliver results that matter most to carers
- **Care in all we do** – we care for our work, about each other, about Tasmania's family and friend carers, and the bigger world we all share
- **Integrity always** – we are transparent, act ethically, own when things don't go to plan and do what we say we will
- **Quality every time** – we don't accept 'good enough' because carers deserve our very best every time
- **Speed that matters** – we are agile and don't put off what can be done today.

These values represent how we engage with and serve carers, how we work with each other, and our commitment to the broader community. Carers Tasmania encourages partnership with governments and health and community sectors to enhance service provision and improve conditions for family or friend carers through policy development, research and advocacy.

We acknowledge and support people of all genders, sexualities, cultural beliefs, and abilities and understand that carers in Tasmania, whilst sharing the common theme of caring for a family member or friend, are diverse individuals with varying beliefs, experiences, and identities. We value and respect the diversity of carers, their lived and living experiences, and recognise that carers are the experts in their own lives.

Carers Tasmania has offices in Moonah, Launceston and Burnie.

Please direct any enquiries about this report to:

Dr Samantha Fox
Chief Executive Officer
Phone: (03) 6144 3700
Email: ceo@carerstasmania.org

Contents

1. Background.....	4
2. Introduction	5
3. Feedback on the Discussion Paper.....	6
4. Recommendations.....	11
5. Conclusion	11

1. Background

Carers Tasmania is the Peak Body representing the more than 87,000 informal carers within the state.

A carer is a person who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, or friend, with disability, mental ill health, a chronic or life-limiting condition, alcohol or other drug dependence, or who is frail or aged. Informal kinship carers who care for a child under the age of 18, because the parent is unable to, are also recognised as carers. Carers are predominantly family members, but may also be friends, neighbours, or colleagues. Informal carers are not to be confused with paid support workers who are often called 'carers', with the difference being that support workers are fully employed and remunerated with all the benefits of employment. On the contrary, informal carers perform their caring duties without remuneration, other than minimal carer payments and allowances from the Australian Government.

In addition to representing carers through the Peak Body activities, Carers Tasmania provides support to carers living in Tasmania through its service delivery arm, Care2Serve. The Australian Government Carer Gateway program is delivered through Care2Serve in Tasmania, as are other supports and services, such as the Tasmanian Government's Home and Community Care program.

Anyone may become a carer at any time. Tasmania is home to a large caring population, with estimates showing that one in six people living in Tasmania is a carer. This proportion of caring is higher than the national average. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) revealed that there were 80,100 carers in Tasmania in 2018.¹ By 2022, this figure had increased to more than 87,000.²

The Carer Gateway program provides a range of free services and supports for carers which are designed to build resilience and knowledge, increase wellbeing, improve quality of life, and sustain carers to effectively continue their caring roles. The available supports include the provision of information, advice and referrals, holistic identification of carer strengths and needs through a carer support planning process, professional counselling, peer support, and coaching which aims to support carers in achieving specific goals.

Care2Serve, through the Carer Gateway, has capacity to fund certain instances of planned, practical support services such as in-home respite, personal care, domestic assistance, and meal preparation. Care2Serve may also fund items such as laptops to assist carers who are studying or trying to enter the workforce. Care2Serve also coordinates the provision of emergency support during instances where a carer may be unable to provide the care that they usually do, resulting from unexpected illness or injury of the carer.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 44300DO006_2018 Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Tasmania, 2018. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (abs.gov.au)

² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022. Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

2. Introduction

Carers Tasmania is pleased to respond to the Discussion Paper on Targeted Amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*.³ This Discussion Paper forms part of the Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024 – 2026.⁴ These reforms are welcomed and aim to help restore community confidence in the overall governance, integrity, and reputation of the sector. They also implement crucial findings and recommendations from the Future of Local Government Review.

The Government is undertaking three main legislative projects as part of these reforms:

- “1. Targeted amendments to the Local Government Act 1993.*
- 2. The re-making of the Local Government General Regulations 2015 and Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2015. These first two projects target Strategic Priorities 1 and 2 [below].*
- 3. The development of a new Local Government Elections Bill. This Bill targets Strategic Priority 3 [below].”⁵*

As noted, the Priority Reform Program, brings together key recommendations from the Future of Local Government Review⁶ and the earlier Local Government Legislation Review,⁷ aiming to act upon feedback on the need to respond to concerns about the conduct of elected members and aspects of council governance.

The Priority Reform Program is built around five strategic priorities:

- “1. Lifting standards of professionalism, conduct, and integrity: Enhancing governance frameworks and promoting ethical conduct within councils to build public trust and confidence.*
- 2. Driving a high-performing, transparent, and accountable sector: Improving transparency, accountability, and performance across the local government sector through better oversight and reporting mechanisms.*
- 3. Improving local democracy and representation: Strengthening democratic processes and ensuring fair representation within councils to reflect the diverse interests of communities.*
- 4. Supporting council financial sustainability: Ensuring councils are financially viable and can sustainably manage resources to meet current and future community needs.*

³ Office of Local Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2024). Targeted amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/408127/Priority-Reform-Program-Discussion-Paper-Dec-2024.pdf

⁴ Office of Local Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (n.d). Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0021/405219/OLG-FLG-Priority-Reform-Program.pdf

⁵ Office of Local Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2024). Targeted amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/408127/Priority-Reform-Program-Discussion-Paper-Dec-2024.pdf

⁶ Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2023). The Future of Local Government Review – Final Report. https://www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The-Future-of-Local-Government-Review-Final-Report.pdf?trk=public_post_comment-text

⁷ Department of Premier and Cabinet. (n.d). Local Government Legislation Review. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government/legislation/legislation_reviews/local_government_legislation_review

5. Supporting council and community-led structural reform: Facilitating structural reforms driven by councils and communities to improve service delivery and operational efficiency.”⁸

3. Feedback on the Discussion Paper

Legislating the Good Governance Principles

Carers Tasmania is supportive of the strategic priorities such as the recommendation to legislate the Good Governance Principles (Priority 1), as well as increasing mechanisms and the scope of the Minister for Local Government, to include temporary advisors, additional mandatory learning and development obligations, provisions for serious councillor misconduct, Performance Improvement Directions (PID's), and improved clarification around work, health and safety obligations.

Legislating the Good Governance Principles will have positive follow-on effects, as described below:

“This change will have both important symbolic and practical effects. Elevating the principles to primary legislation sends a clear message to councils and communities about expected standards, while also allowing for the principles to be embedded on key aspects of the legislative framework, including strategic planning and reporting, education, and compliance monitoring and enforcement.”⁹

It is noted that the Good Governance Principles mirror those presented in the Good Governance Guide.¹⁰

It is noted that the Minister for Local Government will be empowered to issue guidelines of expected standards under the principles, which will support councils to interpret and apply the principles in different circumstances and contexts. Carers Tasmania strongly recommends that carers are explicitly referred to within the Good Governance Guide and any guidelines issued by the Minister. The Good Governance Guide currently includes a section outlining the Tasmanian local government strategic planning framework, which provides some examples of additional strategies that local governments may wish to develop. This list includes strategies relating to disability, youth and social inclusion, but does not refer to strategies for carers. Although this list is not exhaustive, we recommend this section explicitly refers to carers. This is a simple addition that has potential to promote greater recognition, inclusion, and other positive changes for carers within their local government areas.

Carers are integral to their local communities, with data showing that approximately one in six Tasmanians are caring for another person. When consulting and developing strategies, policies, and programs for people who may be receiving care from others, such as people with disability and older Tasmanians, their carers must also be considered and have opportunities to participate and have their voices heard. Whilst many Tasmanian councils currently have in place community engagement policies, strategies and frameworks,

⁸ Office of Local Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (n.d). Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-2026. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/405219/OLG-FLG-Priority-Reform-Program.pdf

⁹ Office of Local Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2024). Targeted amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/408127/Priority-Reform-Program-Discussion-Paper-Dec-2024.pdf

¹⁰ Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Office of Local Government. (2022). Good Governance Guide for Local Government in Tasmania. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/222157/Good-Governance-Guide-4-August-2022.pdf

referring to supporting and including diverse community members, not all of them explicitly refer to, or recognise, carers.

Data shows that carers are socially isolated, and this has significant impacts on their wellbeing.^{11,12} This in turn can impact their capacity to continue providing effective care. Legislating the Good Governance Principles and including recognition and support for carers in guidance materials to implement the principles will help address issues for carers at the local level. It will also reinforce the Tasmanian Government's leadership in promoting carer recognition and inclusion.

Improving the strategic planning and reporting frameworks

Carers Tasmania supports the proposals to introduce statutory requirements for councils to develop strategic plans, community engagement plans and workforce development plans and for councils to retain significant flexibility to set strategic priorities that are relevant and important to each of their communities.

Carers Tasmania also supports the 10-year horizon for strategic plans and the proposal to *"require councils when developing those plans to specifically consult with local communities to identify and include agreed wellbeing priorities, objectives, and outcomes."*¹³ Consultation and collaboration methods currently vary across councils. Therefore, the requirement for authentic, and collaborative consultation will provide clarity and ensure a more cohesive, best-practice approach.

The Discussion Paper states:

*"It is envisaged public engagement to determine community wellbeing priorities could be incorporated into the existing consultation requirements for strategic plans. Councils would then be required to report publicly on progress against these priorities in their annual reports."*¹⁴

Carers Tasmania supports this idea and highlights the importance of community consultation to ensure that councils meet the varied needs of their communities.

Given that one in six Tasmanians are carers, it is critical that the needs and aspirations of Tasmanian carers are considered and addressed in all Council strategic plans. There are several challenges faced by Tasmanian carers that would be best addressed at the local government level. Many Tasmanian councils already consider the needs of carers and the people they care for in their communities, through for example, ensuring accessible parking and facilities, and implementing community programs and engagements for carers and the people they care for, including people with disability, older Tasmanians, and people with chronic and life-limiting conditions. However, many councils do not adequately address the needs of Tasmanian carers and the people they care for.

The following two examples demonstrate some scenarios from carers where strategic plans developed through effective, community consultation would provide an opportunity to address challenges faced by Tasmanian carers and create positive change.

¹¹ Carers NSW. (n.d). National Carer Surveys. <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/about-us/our-research/carers-survey>

¹² Carers Australia. (n.d). Carer Wellbeing Surveys. <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/carers-wellbeing-survey/>

¹³ Office of Local Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2024). Targeted amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/408127/Priority-Reform-Program-Discussion-Paper-Dec-2024.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid.

Examples from Tasmanian carers:

- *"I have a 5-year-old son who uses a wheelchair or a walking frame and a 4-year-old typically developing daughter. Currently, there are only 3 parks in Launceston that have equipment my son can use.*

Riverbend Park has one disability swing and a recently installed wheelchair swing which the local community fundraised to have installed.

The Cataract Gorge has a disability swing, however getting the wheelchair into the lift and down to the park is extremely difficult without the assistance of a support worker or a member of the community to help. The door to the chair lift has a gate and a door which both need to be held open whilst I push my son into the lift.

Royal Park has a disability chair carousel which was donated by the 'Just Like Jack' charity. My son and daughter both love to go to the City Park. As most 5-year-old boys do, he adores riding on the train. Unfortunately, there is no equipment he can play on in the playground section. He has become too big to safely sit in the swing as he is too tall and doesn't understand he needs to swing his legs, so they don't hit the ground.

I would like to see proper community consultation on parks, I believe it should be legislated that any park that is redeveloped or installed must meet the standards for disability inclusion and access. It's unacceptable that we still have new parks being built in Tasmanian that don't cater to the whole community. I would also like to see the Launceston City Council install Two Way Street Communications boards at the Riverbend Park and the City Park along with a disability swing at the City Park.

Another barrier to the community is the lack of accessible bathrooms. My son weighs 18kg and is too heavy for the standard wall mounted change tables that are installed in most public bathrooms. Launceston currently has two Changing Places bathrooms; one is located at the Launceston Aquatic Centre and the other is located behind Target. It is important to know that Changing Places are different to standard AS1428.1 universal access toilets. These facilities include an adult-size change table, toilet, ceiling hoist, and adequate room for two people to assist, and in some cases a shower also. This bathroom is accessible only with a Master Locksmiths Access Key MLAK Key, which cost \$25 to purchase. The (MLAK) system is an MLAA initiative that allows people with disability access to dedicated public facilities, including facilities in National Parks and many Council municipalities, elevators at railway stations, the new Changing Places facilities throughout Australia, and disabled toilets that are locked. The Victorian Government provides them for free for people with disability.

Given the lack of local accessible bathrooms, the alternative is to lay him down on the floor of a public toilet to change, in our opinion, this is unacceptable. Leaving us with our only other option as the back of our car, when he requires his continence aids to be changed whilst we are in the community. We try to provide as much privacy as we can whilst we change him. It would be great if one could be installed ½ way along the Midlands Highway for people making the drive from Launceston to Hobart and one somewhere on the North West Coast highway.

This leads me to our third barrier when accessing the community, the lack of available Wheelchair parking. As my son gets older and heavier, the ability to be able to park in a disability parking spot more often than not determines if we can attend

the planned activity. This is for two reasons, first if I park in a regular car spot there is not enough room to lift the 30kg wheelchair out of the boot and manoeuvre it safely to the sidewalk without hitting the car parked behind us. Second, I need to ensure we are parked as close to the activity or premisses we are attending in case I need to use the boot of our car as his bathroom.

Accessing the community has so many benefits for people with a disability their carers, and families. The struggle to access everyday places like our local park or farmers market is made so much more difficult due to these barriers. I hope by highlighting our family's struggles it will create positive conversation, awareness and lead to change."

- *"As a carer for my elderly wife who has Dementia, I have come across challenges in finding disability accessible bathrooms, especially when travelling across Tasmania. My wife needs support to use the bathroom, and where there have been no accessible options, I have received judgement from community members who don't understand her need for support."*

The following comments provide some initial feedback from carers about their local council areas and are taken from the yet to be published, 2025 Tasmanian Carer Survey:

- **Northern Midlands Council:** *"No public transport, no services local to the area, and people are not willing to travel from Launceston or Hobart to support my family. We live here because we can't afford to live anywhere else with the current cost of rentals."*
- **West Tamar Council:** *"No public transport. Country area - no carer service. Shop and fuel outlet closed down."*
- **Sorell Council:** *"Small community with very little disability awareness or support."*
- **Launceston Council (City of Launceston):** *"Middle class, there is knowledge of ND [neurodiversity] and caring roles but can also be isolating if you don't fit the mould. I have a few friends that are other parents, but in general if it wasn't for family we wouldn't get much help." ¹⁵*

These carer comments illustrate some of the factors contributing to the social isolation of carers, and social isolation more broadly, within local communities.

Whilst Carers Tasmania understands that commitments have been made by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, to fund additional accessible infrastructure projects^{16,17} relevant to the carer comments provided, this current Local Government Reform provides an important opportunity to embed improved consideration of the needs of carers and the people they care for, as well as collaboration and community consultation mechanisms, into strategic planning processes to ensure that the local voices of carers and those they support are heard and considered.

¹⁵ Carers Tasmania. (2025). Unpublished data.

¹⁶ Australian Government Department of Social Services. (2025). The Commonwealth Accessible Australia Initiative. <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-support-services/accessible-australia>

¹⁷ Tasmanian Government. Premier of Tasmania. (n.d). <https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/our-plan/supporting-our-communities/supporting-tasmanians-with-disability>

Workforce Development Plans

Carers Tasmania supports the proposal to introduce a requirement for councils to develop and adopt workforce development plans. In developing these plans, it is recommended that councils are required to consider carer friendly workplace adjustments that go above the basic obligations under the National Employment Standards. This could include adopting initiatives or accreditation methods such as the Carers in the Workplace Initiative¹⁸ and Carers + Employers accreditation program.¹⁹

Role of the Minister for Local Government

Carers Tasmania highlights the role of the Minister for Local Government and proposed amendments to their functions, especially regarding the capacity to issue guidelines and mandatory learning and development modules. We recommend that the Minister for Local Government also plays a part in highlighting the importance of the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023*²⁰ and the Charter that sits within it, to local councils, to promote carer awareness, recognition, and support. This will help councils in planning and interacting with those in their communities who are carers and will support employees who have caring responsibilities.

Supporting cross-government approaches

Improving carer recognition, inclusion and support requires a cross-government approach. On a national level, extensive reform has occurred with the introduction of the National Carer Gateway Program in 2020. In 2023, the Tasmanian Government introduced the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act*.²¹ In 2024, the Australian Government released the National Carer Strategy.²² In 2024, the Tasmanian Government released a refreshed version of the *Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2021-2025*, which includes key actions that Tasmanian Government Departments have committed to undertake to better recognise, include and support carers.²³ The Tasmanian Government has also historically played a major role in funding local events for National Carers Week, which is an important week to raise awareness about carers, recognise the significant contributions they make, and an opportunity to provide thanks and appreciation across communities. A significant portion of work is being undertaken within the Tasmanian Government to ensure that it is a carer friendly and aware workplace.

To support the work being undertaken by the Australian and Tasmanian governments through these important reforms, commitments to better recognise, include and support carers must also be undertaken at the local government level. These requirements should be included in the Good Governance Guide and any guidelines developed by the Minister about expected standards under the Good Governance Principles.

¹⁸ Australian Government and Carer-Inclusive Workplace Initiative. (2025). <https://carerinclusive.com.au/>

¹⁹ Carers and Employers. (n.d). <https://carersandemployers.org.au/>

²⁰ Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act (2023). <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/2023-04-20/act-2023-001>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Commonwealth of Australia. Department of Social Services. (2024). National Carer Strategy 2024-2034. <https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/documents/2024-12/national-carer-strategystrategyfinalweb.pdf>

²³ Tasmanian Government. Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2024). Supporting Tasmanian Carers. Tasmanian Carer Action Plan 2021-2025.

https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/246248/Supporting-Tasmanian-Carers-Tasmanian-Carer-Action-Plan-2021-2025.pdf

Evidence shows that Tasmania performs quite poorly across many health outcome areas, as well as having high rates of disability and a rapidly ageing population.²⁴ The reliance on carers will only continue to grow over future years. Therefore, these reforms provide a timely opportunity to put in place mechanisms to ensure that carers will be considered and included at the local government level, now and into the future.

4. Recommendations

Carers Tasmania recommends that:

- Carers must be referred to within the Good Governance Guide and any guidelines and standards issued by the Minister to implement the Good Governance Principles, to ensure consideration of carers within future policies, strategies, frameworks and related initiatives.
- Local governments must be required to engage with, and consider the needs of, Tasmanian carers and the people they care for in the development of strategic plans. This will include authentic consultation and collaboration, as well as ensuring infrastructure and programs address the needs of carers and initiatives such as National Carers Week, which recognises and celebrates carers, are supported.
- Local governments are encouraged to explore carer friendly workplace adjustments, such as the Carers in the Workplace Initiative²⁵ and Carers + Employers accreditation program.²⁶
- As a representative of the Tasmanian Government with responsibilities under the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023*,²⁷ the Minister for Local Government is encouraged to champion carer recognition, inclusion and rights across local government.

5. Conclusion

Carers Tasmania is grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Discussion Paper on the Targeted Amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*. We trust that our feedback will be considered and that through this important reform, carer recognition, inclusion and support will be improved at the local government level. This will complement the work being undertaken to make positive changes for carers by both the Tasmanian and Australian governments.

²⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). 2021 Tasmania, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

²⁵ Australian Government and Carer-Inclusive Workplace Initiative. (2025). <https://carerinclusive.com.au/>

²⁶ Carers and Employers. (n.d). <https://carersandemployers.org.au/>

²⁷ Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act (2023). <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/2023-04-20/act-2023-001>