

Comments on proposed Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances

November 2025

By Kingborough Councillor Flora Fox

I am opposed to the proposed reduction in Councillor numbers and to Government interference in setting Councillor allowances.

Reducing Councillor numbers will lead to a loss of community representation a dilution of Council democracy.

A reduction of Councillors will lead to a loss of diversity of representation of gender, age and culture in Local Government.

A reduction in Councillor numbers will disadvantage independent community minded candidates, with local connections, knowledge and experience, including retirees with long term horizons and corporate knowledge.

Committee Chairs will be harder to find with more Councillors employed elsewhere full-time.

Achieving Quorums may become difficult to achieve due to sickness and leave.

With recently introduced compulsory voting in Local Government, Political Party aligned candidates have already been given an apparent advantage in the last election.

With the introduction of compulsory voting, plus a reduction in Councillor numbers Local Government will become an easier steppingstone to State and Federal government.

Reduction in numbers and compulsory voting will mean independent candidates, young people and new faces will find it harder to be elected. Representation of diverse culture, age and gender will be reduced. Retirees with local history and experience will be disadvantaged.

Councillors are elected by the community to represent their views. Councillors are not government employees.

State and Federal politicians are not expected to do compulsory training courses, and neither should training courses be mandatory for Local Councillors.

The Local Government Act, Meeting Procedures and Code of Conduct provide the guiding principles for Councillors.

Councillors must be guided by Council's professional staff in all decisions that come before Council.

Councillors' role is to learn from the community, fellow Councillors around the Council table and professional Council staff.

The Local Government Association of Tasmania provides excellent and relevant educational opportunities with professional speakers at regular conferences, which are well attended.

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In smaller Councils, reducing the number of Councillors representing the community could lead to amalgamation by stealth by making smaller Councils unviable, due to lack of quorums.

Increased allowances could be seen as a carrot or an incentive to accept of reduced numbers of Councillors. Councillor allowances have traditionally been determined by the Industrial Commission, an independent body, and not by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Although I understand that the Industrial Commission have recommended the current changes to the Department of Premier and Cabinet; to allow the proposed allowances to be cost neutral to Councils, this would not be achieved in Kingborough's case. The proposed reduction of one Councillor and an increase in allowance would produce a net additional cost of \$10,282 per annum.

No financial analysis has been provided to justify the setting of allowances to reflect the growing complexity and time required to perform Councillor functions. Especially the time, skill and resilience required to act as a Planning Authority and changing to a Statewide Planning Scheme in community experiencing 40 years of rapid growth.

The reform discussion paper suggests a four yearly review of Councillor numbers and allowances to be embedded in legislation. I am opposed to any reduction in Councillor numbers and to Government interference in setting Councillor allowances.

In my view, the review of allowances should be managed separately by the Industrial Commission.

Arbitrary allowance increases achieved by reducing Councillor numbers confuses the two issues of Councillor allowances and Councillor numbers.

Councillor allowances, set by the Industrial Commission, although indexed, have not been reviewed since 2017-18. When will the Councillor allowances be reviewed again by the independent Industrial Commission?

Kingborough Councillor Flora Fox

Elected Councillor from 1988 to 2026.