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7 November 2025

The Hon Kerry Vincent MLC
Minister for Local Government

Email: Minister.Vincent@dpac.tas.gov.au

A hard copy will not be sent unless requested

Dear Minister

DISCUSSION PAPER – REFORMS TO COUNCILLOR NUMBERS AND ALLOWANCES

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on proposed changes to councillor numbers and allowances. Please find below some brief comments summarising workshop discussions on behalf of Burnie City Council.

Council supports a consistent framework, review process and understanding of how councillor numbers are determined. Such clarity is welcomed and provides a sound platform for now and into the future.

More broadly however, Council does not believe the changes should be undertaken in isolation, and support broader sectoral reform, including amalgamations, rather than a tinkering around the edges as these changes appear to propose.

At the September 2025 meeting of Council, it was resolved “That Council remains open to future reforms that call for amalgamations and further Councillor reductions and greater accountability of Councillors”.

In the discussion paper, it is stated that “fewer, better-paid councillors will assist in attracting skilled and diverse candidates, improving decision-making and professionalism”. Council does not agree with this statement as a range of other legislative reforms are necessary to enhance professionalism and behaviour and apply appropriate sanctions in the case of a breach of these standards. A reduction in councillor numbers does not guarantee better decision making. Similarly, the notion that existing councillors face increased complexity in their role is hard to justify without further explanation and examples.

Further to this point, increasing councillor allowances as proposed in the discussion paper is not likely to attract a greater volume of councillor candidates. Many candidates are attracted by a civic duty or desire to help the community, not money. A decision to stand for election is more likely to be influenced by factors including family circumstances, work arrangements, timing and structure of meetings/events, and social media behaviour. The sector needs to continue to focus attention on this space to allow flexibility and an environment that is safe and conducive to good decision making.

Specifically relating to the three key questions as part of the discussion paper:

- *Should the Government consider any strategies/guidance for council decision making where a quorum cannot be maintained?*

Burnie City Council has not formed a view on this matter as it is not a Council earmarked to have a maximum of 5 councillors.

- *Should the Local Government Act 1993 be amended to require councils to pay a 12% superannuation equivalent payment from allowances into a councillor's nominated superannuation fund?*

Council believes the existing arrangements are adequate and see no reason to change.

- *Should the methodology and ongoing review framework for councillor allowances and numbers be embedded in legislation to provide certainty and transparency to the sector and community?*

Yes. A mandatory schedule for regular reviews should be included in legislation. This will provide certainty around future reviews and transparency into how they are to occur.

Some brief other points to consider:

- A reduction in councillor numbers could lead to more moderate candidates being excluded and create a range of ramifications as a result. Party politics could become more evident in Tasmanian Local Government.
- If the allowance becomes too high, the industry needs to ensure this does not lead to more full time councillors and a blurring of the line between governance, strategy and operations.
- For Burnie, under the proposed arrangements, population per councillor will move from a current 2,271 to 2,563 – this remains manageable and represents reasonable representation. Population projection calculations at the local government level are volatile and Council has some concerns about the use of these projections in new methodology. This is particularly relevant to local government areas that have previously grown at faster rates than the projected population figures e.g. Kingborough.
- As Council operations increase in complexity, and should amalgamations occur, a skills based approach to elected candidates becomes more critical to support strong decision making.

In summary, whilst not unanimous, Council support in principle the reduction in councillor numbers as proposed in the discussion paper. Council seek consideration of the above points in order to more effectively bring benefit to the sector and encourage greater attention to broader, wholesale reform options.

Yours sincerely



Shane Crawford
GENERAL MANAGER