

7 November 2025

Office of Local Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet
PO BOX 123
Hobart, Tasmania 7000
By Email Only: lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

To the Office of Local Government,

Re: Discussion Paper – Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed reforms to Councillor numbers and allowances as outlined in the recent discussion paper.

The Northern Midlands Council does not support a reduction in the number of Councillors. Northern Midlands Council takes the position that reducing Councillor numbers risks diminishing the diversity of views and backgrounds represented on Council. This is especially problematic in small communities, where conflicts of interest are more likely. At a recent meeting, two Councillors were absent and two declared an interest, leaving only five eligible to participate. If the number were reduced from nine to seven, only three Councillor would have remained in the room, severely impacting timely and effective decision-making.

Councillors already face significant demands, and reducing their number will increase individual workloads, potentially leading to delays, lack of responsiveness, and reduced capacity to act in the best interests of municipal residents.

This proposal does not address the real challenges facing local government. A more effective solution would be to focus on providing stability and improvement at the state government level, ensuring strong leadership and support for councils. The proposal appears to be a step towards amalgamation, presented as a reform but likely to result in significant changes to local representation. This approach undermines trust and transparency.

We also fail to understand how the reforms will be cost neutral in practice. While the paper asserts that savings from reducing the number of Councillors will fund the increased allowances, the detailed tables show that only some councils will achieve net savings, while others may face increased costs due to allowance band progression or historical reductions in numbers. The paper acknowledges that a few councils, due to prior voluntary reductions or allowance band adjustments, may face small cost increases under the new

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framework, but does not provide sufficient detail on how these costs will be managed or offset. We request further transparency and modelling to demonstrate how cost neutrality will be achieved across all councils.

While reforms to Councillor numbers and allowances are being considered, we are concerned about the pace of implementation for other important reforms identified in the Local Government Priority Reform Agenda 2024–26. These include compulsory Councillor education, flexible meeting attendance, paid parental leave, increased superannuation, and stronger sanctions for misconduct. We urge the Government to implement these complementary reforms in a timelier fashion, as delays risk undermining the effectiveness and appeal of local government service.

The suggested changes seem superficial and lack substantive benefit for local communities. Greater effort should be directed towards implementing already proposed reforms, which have been publicly discussed and announced. The lack of progress on these reforms is eroding respect for higher levels of government.

In summary, Council does not support a reduction in Councillor numbers. We urge the Government to reconsider this aspect of the reform and instead focus on measures that genuinely strengthen local government and community representation, while ensuring transparency, cost neutrality, and timely implementation of broader reforms.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Knowles". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mayor Mary Knowles OAM

Northern Midlands Council

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