

**PREMIER'S
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COUNCIL**

Monday 9 December 2019, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm
Premier's Reception Room, Level 11, 15 Murray Street, Hobart

Meeting Minutes

PLGC Members	
Hon Will Hodgman MP	Premier (Chair)
Hon Mark Shelton MP	Minister for Local Government
Cr Christina Holmdahl	President, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) General Management Committee (GMC), Mayor, West Tamar Council
Cr Anna Reynolds	Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council
Cr Ben Shaw	Vice President, LGAT GMC Mayor, Derwent Valley Council
Cr Annette Rockliff	Mayor, Devonport City Council
Cr Mick Tucker	Mayor, Break O'Day Council
Ald Brendan Blomeley	Alderman, Clarence City Council
Cr Daryl Quilliam	Mayor, Circular Head Council
Cr Geoff Lyons	Councillor, West Tamar Council
PLGC Officials	
Nick Heath	General Manager, Hobart City Council
Sandra Ayton	General Manager, Central Coast Council
Des Jennings	General Manager, Northern Midlands Council
Dr Katrena Stephenson	Chief Executive Officer, LGAT
Dion Lester	Policy Director, LGAT
Craig Limkin	Deputy Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)
Alex Tay	Director of Local Government, Local Government Division (LGD), DPAC
Secretariat	
Luke Murphy-Gregory	A/g Assistant Director, LGD, DPAC
Mitchell Cook	Policy and Project Officer, LGD, DPAC

Ministerial support	
Mel Brown	Senior Adviser to Minister Shelton
Prue Gusmerini	Deputy Chief of Staff to Premier
Guests	
Hon Peter Gutwein MP	Treasurer; Minister for the Environment, Parks and Heritage
Stuart Hollingsworth	Director, Workforce Policy and Strategic Relations, Skills Tasmania
David Harradine	Partner, KPMG
David Richardson	Director Advisory, KPMG
Dominic Oswin	Senior Adviser, KPMG

Welcome

The Premier welcomed participants to the final Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) meeting for 2019, and thanked those who had travelled to Hobart to attend the meeting.

The PLGC also acknowledged and thanked Alex Tay for his valued contributions as the Director of Local Government. Mr Tay is taking up a new position in the Department of Education.

Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds, Mayor Annette Rockliff, Des Jennings, Sandra Ayton and Craig Limkin were apologies for the meeting. The PLGC noted that Mr Limkin has recently joined the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) as the Deputy Secretary, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations and will chair the PLGC Officials Committee.

The PLGC noted that the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, Stuart Hollingsworth and representatives from KPMG would be attending the meeting to discuss various agenda items.

The Premier noted that 2019 had been an important year for the future of local government in Tasmania. The State and local governments have worked collaboratively on the Local Government Legislative Review (the Review), developing a number of reform options that will ensure Tasmanian councils can continue to serve the changing interests and priorities of their communities. Next year will be another important year for State and local government collaboration, as the Review moves to its drafting stage.

Agenda Item 1: PLGC minutes from 6 September 2019

The PLGC noted that the four actions arising from the 6 September 2019 meeting had been completed.

The Premier explained that Jenny Gale, the DPAC Secretary, has written to all Heads of Agencies reminding them to observe the five week consultation period when consulting on changes impacting local government. This will ensure that LGAT and councils have adequate opportunity to participate in State Government consultation processes.

The PLGC endorsed the draft minutes of the 6 September 2019 PLGC meeting as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Local Government Legislation Review

Alex Tay provided a status update and overview of the next steps for the Review. The Stage 2 consultation process closed on 30 September 2019, with high levels of engagement from both councils and their communities. The Government is considering the advice of the Steering Committee on the reform directions.

The PLGC noted that in 2020 the Review will move to Phase 3 and will involve consultation on the drafting of the legislation. This will be an iterative process to ensure the new legislation can be understood and implemented by councils.

Mr Tay explained that the intent is for elected members to have input on the drafting of provisions. Katrena Stephenson noted that elected members are more likely to be interested in the intent of the legislation, ~~and less in the~~ as opposed to the detailed wording of provisions. However, if required, LGAT can call special meetings to align with the Review's 2020 consultation timeframes, which could provide elected members the opportunity to discuss and provide comment on the wording of provisions.

Agenda item 3: Director of Local Government's report

Mr Tay discussed the Director of Local Government's report, which outlined his observations and reflections on three years as the Director. Mr Tay discussed the ongoing population trends and the changing roles and expectations of councils, and how these pose challenges for the future sustainability of some councils.

In this context, Mr Tay commented that there remains an opportunity for the local government sector and the State Government to work on a proactive, strategic approach that puts the community at the centre of any reform consideration, and clearly distinguishes between communities' representation needs and their service delivery needs.

Dr Stephenson noted the 21st century councils project that LGAT is continuing to progress in collaboration with councils. Individual councils are currently workshopping key questions at a local level, and Andrew Paul ~~has been~~ will be working with external stakeholders on these matters.

Mayor Daryl Quilliam highlighted the efforts of the Cradle Coast councils in terms of shared services and that region's efforts to implement measures in line with the Cradle Coast councils shared services Report.

Agenda Item 4: Bullying and harassment

The Premier acknowledged the increased focus on bullying and harassment in local government and the more public understanding about the serious impacts of bullying behaviour.

The PLGC agreed that this issue is multifaceted, with there being cases or allegations of bullying between elected members and between elected members and staff, in addition to the bullying of elected members by members in the community.

The PLGC noted that LGAT has been working with councils to understand the bullying and harassment issue, which has involved surveying elected members ~~and local government professionals~~ on their experiences. LGAT has also held social media training sessions (for elected members and officers) to address how to best use social media and what practical steps may be taken to manage unwanted social

media interactions. The PLGC noted that LGAT ~~has~~ recently held a Mayors Professional Development session, attended by the Minister for Local Government, to discuss this important issue.

LGAT will ~~be aiming to develop an~~leverage the recent face to face training to provide some online ~~program materials for that~~ members ~~can go to for assistance~~who could not attend. This will be complemented by other ~~measures~~training in 2020 that will aim to ~~develop~~enhance resilience among members.

The PLGC noted that the State Government is willing to continue to work collaboratively with the local government sector on practical initiatives to address the bullying and harassment issue at the local level.

Agenda Item 5: Charitable rates

The PLGC noted that LGAT has been working with the Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS) and Aged Care Services Australia (ACSA) to attempt to find a policy consensus option on the eligibility of independent living units for a rates exemption under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Mayor Christina Holmdahl explained that affected councils are advocating for changes to be in place in the first half of 2020, to enable certainty in terms of rate setting for the 2020-21 financial year. Dr Stephenson acknowledged that there are complex issues that need to be worked through, but suggested that these be separately considered as part of the broader Review.

Mr Tay noted the equity argument put forward by the sector, and explained that a view on what is equitable is complex in this context. For example, the State explicitly exempts retirement villages from land tax in Tasmania.

The PLGC agreed that key stakeholders should continue to work together to develop options to address the charitable rates eligibility issue, with stakeholders and Government to convene early in the New Year for a roundtable discussion.

Agenda Item 6: Enhancing council performance reporting

The PLGC was presented with a prototype for a Tasmanian council performance reporting website.

The PLGC agreed that the website concept presents a range of potential benefits, including increased transparency and accountability and supporting councils' strategic and financial planning processes. The website may also enable the community to learn more about their councils and the factors that drive performance. The PLGC provided its in-principle support for the performance reporting website concept.

Mr Tay explained that, because the process is being worked through the existing annual Consolidated Data Collection, the website is unlikely to result in any additional time or resource impost on councils.

The PLGC noted that councils will be consulted on the website prior to launching a final product. It is also the Government's intention that councils will have the opportunity to review their data before it is published, which will be part of the annual process for updating the website with new data, as it is collected.

While the website currently only includes a small portion of the information collected through the CDC, there are opportunities for expanding the website to include other CDC information and to expand the

CDC in future to collect information that is not currently collected. Any additional reporting would be done in consultation with the sector and in general would be at its request.

Agenda Item 7: Strategic labour force planning and skills development

The PLGC discussed strategic labour force planning and skills development in Tasmania, including the importance of ensuring the appropriate supply and demand of skilled labour in regional parts of the State.

The Treasurer, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP attended the PLGC meeting to provide an overview of the National Population and Planning Framework (the Framework), which is a collaborative initiative of the Australian Government and the state and territory governments. The PLGC noted that the Framework will help to understand future skills requirements and how skilled labour can be encouraged beyond our major capital cities, including in Tasmania.

Stuart Hollingsworth attended the meeting to provide an overview of the current regional workforce development initiatives being coordinated by Skills Tasmania. Mr Hollingsworth noted that, although industries may organise State-wide, their workforce development issues often get resolved at the local level.

Skills Tasmania has ~~been collaborating with~~ supported Sorell, Tasman, Clarence and Glamorgan Spring Bay councils ~~to work~~ on the South East Regional Development Authority (SERDA). Initiatives such as these are complemented by Skills Tasmania's work with LGAT to purchase licences for *Profile.id*, enabling councils to develop data portals, tailored to their local government areas, to inform workforce planning and skills development.

The PLGC noted that the Derwent Valley Council is working with other non-metropolitan councils in the South-East to develop a ~~regional development authority model~~ similar to ~~the SERDA model~~. Mayor Ben Shaw suggested that the SERDA model is something the State Government could implement in other parts of the State.

Agenda Item 8: Waste management

The Hon Peter Gutwein MP, in his capacity as Minister for the Environment, Parks and Heritage, provided an update on the implementation, at a national level, of the ban on the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres.

Minister Gutwein also provided an update on the draft *Waste Action Plan*, the State-wide waste levy and the Container Refund Scheme. Dr Stephenson thanked the Government for inviting LGAT to participate on the *Waste Action Plan's* inter-departmental committee.

Agenda Item 9: State Coastal Policy

The PLGC noted the State Coastal Policy paper.

Agenda Item 10: Statewide Planning

The PLGC noted the Statewide Planning paper.

Agenda Item 11: Economic development snapshot

The PLGC noted the Economic development snapshot and attachment.

Agenda Item 12: Communiqué approval

The PLGC agreed that the LGAT CEO and Director of Local Government would prepare a final version of the Communiqué for approval prior to publication, taking account of the meeting discussion.

Agenda Item 13: Other business and meeting close

Mayor Holmdahl raised a matter under other business in relation to the Code of Conduct process. Mayor Holmdahl suggested that the process be revised to include a mediation process that ensures 'all reasonable steps' have been taken to resolve the issue before proceeding with a formal Code of Conduct investigation.

Mr Tay noted that a similar process already exists whereby the Code of Conduct Panel Chair considers what reasonable steps have been taken to resolve the complaint. Some complaints have been dismissed on the basis that a Chair has assessed that the complainant has not made a reasonable effort, but these are not publicly disclosed because they do not have a determination report.

Mayor Holmdahl noted that the Break O'Day Council will be moving a motion at the next LGAT General Meeting for the State Government to consider deferring local government elections by six months. The next local government elections are in 2022, the same year as the next State and Federal elections. Mayor Holmdahl also suggested that deferring by six months would provide an opportunity for newly elected members to settle into their roles prior to the first local government budget processes.

The Premier thanked the PLGC members for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed 4:15 pm

Actions

There were no actions arising from the 9 December 2019 PLGC meeting.