

25 September 2019

Mr Simon Roberts  
Director, Office of Security and Emergency Management  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
GPO Box 123  
HOBART 7001

Dear Simon

### **Draft Tasmanian Disaster Resilience Strategy 2020 - 2025**

Thank you for providing the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) with an opportunity to make a submission on the Draft Tasmanian Disaster Resilience Strategy 2020-2025 (the Strategy). LGAT provided the draft Strategy to all our member councils for comment but only a small number of councils provided specific feedback. We think this is likely a consequence of the significant amount of State Government documentation out for consultation across a range of portfolios combined with the significant level of consultation undertaken during the development of the strategy. However, with the information received and the continuous policy work LGAT undertakes with councils, we have confidence that our submission reflects the broad sector views.

LGAT is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body and advocate for Local Government in Tasmania. Where a Council has made a direct submission to this process, any omission of specific comments made by that Council in LGAT's submission should not be viewed as lack of support on that matter. .

LGAT acknowledges the considerable work undertaken in developing the Strategy and commends the Department of Premier and Cabinet for the significant consultation undertaken during the development of the Strategy. The Strategy's aim of increasing resilience has significant merit and aligns well with the current international and national focus. The strength of the Strategy is the desire to empower and motivate the collective

efforts of the community towards building resilience rather than the selected efforts of government and emergency management organisations.

The Strategy is a succinct document, supported by a background paper which provides the rationale to support the strategy. The Strategy will provide a good basis for the State and other stakeholders to focus their activities in developing resilience. The Strategy clearly sets out the vision for the strategy, the four key goals, what success looks like, and the key strategies and high-level actions the government will work with others to achieve.

The key omission in the Strategy is how the strategy will be implemented including which Department will oversee delivery and whether the government is willing to provide funding to support the implementation of the Strategy. LGAT recommends that an implementation plan be developed for the Strategy, with allocated funding and measurable outputs against each of the identified priorities..

On several occasions the Strategy identifies where the State Government will support councils to manage risks, disaster preparation and recovery. It is the sector's strong view that this must be supported by appropriate funding.

Many councils are already doing significant work in the space and there are opportunities for councils to learn from each other, increase collaboration and partner with other stakeholders to build resilience. However, the capability and capacity of councils to take on this additional work varies from council to council. Further, Councils with the highest capability are not necessarily those with the greatest natural hazard risk. As such, funding will be essential to the Strategy's success.

Specific comments on the strategy are provided below.

LGAT appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission on the draft submission and looks forward to continued engagement with the Local Government sector on the strategy and its implementation.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact Georgia Palmer at [georgia.palmer@lgat.tas.gov.au](mailto:georgia.palmer@lgat.tas.gov.au) or on (03) 6146 3745

Yours sincerely



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## LGAT Submission: *Draft Tasmanian Resilience Strategy*

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### Specific Comments

The specific feedback relating to sections of the Draft Tasmanian Resilience Strategy 2020-2025 are provided below however are kept concise for ease of reference.

- The terms "Disaster" and "Emergency" are used interchangeably in many emergency management documents. It would be good to have a clear definition to mark the difference in the Strategy. For example, according to dictionary definitions disasters are bigger than emergencies yet, the draft Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements has a phrase implying that disasters lead to emergencies. The varying definitions have the potential to make community education difficult. Given that the discipline of emergency management has not been able to establish a universally accepted definition of these terms, it may be useful to acknowledge that while emergencies and disasters may have the same causes and consequence there is an order of magnitude difference between them.
- There are many references to 'natural disasters' in the Strategy but the document makes little reference to other types of disasters. Human caused disasters (both accidental and intentional) such as aircraft crashes, chemical spills, contamination, industrial accidents, financial collapse, panic, riot and terrorism, are examples of non-natural hazards. Limiting much of the discussion to natural hazards may lead to a bias in resilience,. It also misses an opportunity to introduce the all-hazards approach.
- The point of the Strategy is to offer a rational set of actions towards reducing risk. In section one, certain wording reflecting popular beliefs and emotional messaging are used (i.e. climate change/destroy/intense). "Catastrophic disasters" is another example. This has the potential to bias resilience. Developing resilience to smaller scale emergencies acts as a building block of resilience to disasters. However, encouraging people to commence building resilience for catastrophic disasters is such a daunting task that people may balk at the task.
- The Strategy discusses "the current state of relying on post-disaster funding and focusing on response and recovery..". This does not recognise that there has been a shift towards resilience building albeit not to the extent that is needed. Perhaps it

would be more appropriate to change the language to "There is still a significant reliance on post-disaster funding despite much effort being put into building reliance. Moving towards greater reliance building will...", and turn the dot points around making them positive statements.

- The Strategy states "Everyone can help emergency management professionals and volunteers keep us all safe". From the perspective of the reader this could be interpreted as 'other' people keep 'us' safe - denoting that it is out of the hands of the community. This contrasts with empowering the community, a concept espoused in other places in the strategy. Perhaps rephrasing along the lines of "while emergency management professionals and volunteers play their part in keeping the community safe, it is a resilient community as a whole that enhances community safety".
- The Strategy aims and context section references disaster resilience as **underpinning** the prevention, preparation, response and recovery spectrum (PPRR) for emergency management. It may be more appropriate to refer to disaster resilience as a product of PPRR. If resilience truly underpins PPRR then PPRR would not work in the absence of resilience. To build greater resilience requires putting more emphasis on prevention and preparedness, which is consistent with other messages within the strategy.
- Emergency management is a field of endeavor that spans all aspects of PPRR. Disaster resilience is a component of emergency management that can be applied in any PPRR phase. The Strategy states that "Disaster resilience" focuses on prevention and preparedness and "Emergency Management" focuses on response and recovery. This statement may omit the fact that response and recovery often feed into resilience, the recent experience of a disaster will promote resilience building until the event fades from memory over time. Indeed, recovery is often seen as an opportunistic time to build resilience into the community that is being restored to normal functionality.
- The Strategy makes an assertion that "people are more likely to be disaster resilient if they are healthy, literate, socially connected and financially secure" It is important to note that in the case of the Launceston 2016 flood, middle class residents who were not regular users of community services (e.g. Centrelink) struggled to engage with

recovery services provided at times of need. A socially connected person may have little experience of being socially isolated and therefore become vulnerable in a disaster. It is important that these statements don't bias resilience strategies away from people who fit a stereotype and are defined as resilient.

- The strategy recognises the significance of insurance to (financial) resilience. The challenge may not just be the "limited uptake of insurance" or "Insurance uptake encouragement programs". Insurers are unwilling to insure some circumstances, for example the people most in need of flood insurance live in flood plains where they may not be able to access insurance despite a desire to be insured.
- Volunteers, and the availability and capacity of volunteers to support resilience, have been identified as areas of key need and may fit broadly into 'coordinate support across service providers' in the Tasmanian Government actions under the prepared for disasters goal. This needs to be captured in greater detail in the implementation plan.
- A key piece of data which is not easily available to support risk assessments and planning is the consideration of co-incident risk/ compounding hazards. For example flood inundation risk combined with a storm surge. This should be considered as part of the implementation plan in understanding disaster risk.