



City of **HOBART**

Enquiries to: Office of the CEO

☎: 6238 2727

✉: ceo@hobartcity.com.au

28 October 2025

Office of Local Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet
PO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7000

Via Email: lq.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (TARGETED REFORM) BILL 2025 – EXPOSURE DRAFT CONSULTATION

The City of Hobart welcomes the opportunity to respond to the discussion paper in relation to the Local Government Amendment (Targeted Reform) Bill 2025 – Exposure Draft and commends the Tasmanian Government's commitment to implementing its Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024-26 ahead of the 2026 Local Government elections.

The enclosed submission was endorsed by the Council at its meeting held on 27 October 2025 and provides a response to each of the key consultation issues as identified in the discussion paper.

The City of Hobart looks forward to working with the Office of Local Government as they work with councils in the preparation of key components of the proposed Ministerial Orders prior to the Targeted Bill being debated in Parliament.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important work.

Yours sincerely,



(Michael Stretton)
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Hobart Town Hall
50 Macquarie Street
Hobart TAS 7000

Hobart Council Centre
16 Elizabeth Street
Hobart TAS 7000

City of Hobart
GPO Box 503
Hobart TAS 7001

T 03 6238 2711
F 03 6234 7109
E coh@hobartcity.com.au
W hobartcity.com.au

 CityofHobartOfficial
ABN 39 055 343 428
Hobart City Council

Provision	Comment
Local Government Charter	<p>The Hobart City Council supported the proposal to develop a Local Government Charter through the Future of Local Government Review and its inclusion in this process is supported.</p> <p>Councils are focussing more than ever on the services that they provide to the community and, specifically on service levels.</p> <p>A well-constructed charter would assist councils and their communities to understand and agree the services that are provided by their respective councils.</p>
New serious councillor misconduct provisions;	<p>It's clear to most in the sector that the current Code of Conduct process has been relatively ineffective in addressing inappropriate behaviour by Elected Members.</p> <p>The process is wieldy, time consuming and the sanctions available do not provide a sufficient deterrent for breaches of the Code, when they occur.</p> <p>The provision of an additional 'layer' of sanctions for serious misconduct would be welcome as it would provide added incentive for Elected Members not to engage in any such behaviour and would also provide for suitable response in the unfortunate event that an Elected Member is found to have engaged in serious misconduct.</p> <p>Whilst severe misconduct is to be defined as a "serious or significant contravention of the code", with criteria yet to be developed (by order), it is expected that serious misconduct would relate to examples like: dishonesty (including fraud, theft), physical violence, gross negligence, wilful and/or repeated misconduct, bullying, sexual harassment, disclosure of confidential information, failure to disclose a conflict of interest..(etc).</p>
More flexible and effective early intervention tools to address emerging governance challenges in councils	<p>The proposal to provide an ability for the Minister to issue a performance improvement direction (PID) to a council or councillor in response to a broad range of performance and governance concerns, would provide an agile and timely approach for addressing performance at an individual Elected Member or</p>

	<p>council level without the need for a Code of Conduct process, or a Board of Inquiry process.</p> <p>A PID would provide an opportunity to quickly address issues that have been identified within a council and would therefore be a welcome reform.</p>
<p>Mandating Internal Audit for Councils</p>	<p>The City of Hobart is supportive of the proposed addition of section 84B regarding internal audit. The City already has a well-established governance framework in place, including a Risk and Audit Panel and a 3-year strategic internal audit program outsourced to an external provider. Each year, the Executive Leadership Team and the Risk and Audit Panel review and approve an annual Internal Audit Plan to ensure alignment with strategic priorities and risk management objectives.</p> <p>While we welcome the intent of the amendment, we seek clarification on several points: the scope of “specify requirements,” whether these will relate to audit topics, processes, or standards; whether requirements will be uniform across all councils or tailored to individual circumstances; and how consultation will incorporate sector feedback.</p> <p>We recommend that any requirements be principles-based, allowing councils to maintain risk-based, proportionate internal audit programs that reflect their unique context while meeting minimum standards for independence, frequency, and reporting.</p>
<p>Legislating core councillor learning and development requirements</p>	<p>In recent years the Office of Local Government and LGAT has developed a Local Government Learning and Development Framework which provides a useful resource for Elected Members. In addition to the Framework, councils should be routinely providing learning and development opportunities for their Elected Members, through workshops, conferences, formal and informal training (and the like).</p> <p>The requirement to develop an Elected Member learning and development policy for the council at the start of each term would ensure that the organisation is focused on ensuring that Elected Members do receive an adequate level of learning and development across the sector.</p>

<p>Supporting more consistent data and transparency (including around council rates);</p>	<p>In respect to Council performance reporting, this section is specific to the financial statements in that the Minister may specify performance reporting requirements through an order. The Minister, through an existing order specifies financial management and asset management indicators so this would just be an extension of additional reporting in the future. It's difficult to know the impact as there are no specifics, however, the Council would support increasing transparency.</p> <p>The City of Hobart supports the principle of enhancing transparency in rates notices. Providing clear, easy-to-understand information about how rates are calculated and the drivers for change will help ratepayers better understand how Council invests in services for the community. The City does not object to the proposed wording of section 122A. However, clarification is sought on whether the Minister's order will apply uniformly across all councils or allow for council-specific requirements. Consistency is desirable for ratepayers who own property in multiple municipal areas. The City strongly supports meaningful consultation and recommends that any additional requirements be practical, achievable, and informed by sector best practice.</p> <p>The City also provided the following feedback to the earlier discussion paper and includes it here for completeness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Currently, the City provides explanatory material with annual rates notices, including a flyer outlining how rates are spent and budget context. This information is presented at a municipal area level rather than at the individual property level. While the proposal to provide property-specific information is considered beneficial, it does present practical and resourcing challenges. These include system changes to extract and integrate property-level data, adjustments to outsourced printing and distribution processes, and potential changes to the size and layout of the rates notice to maintain readability and potential cost increases if the rate notice is larger for mailing as a result.
---	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed requirement appears to focus on historical data for the preceding five years. The City recommends that councils also be required to advise ratepayers of future changes that may affect rates liability, such as property revaluations, rating policy changes, or indexation factors. Timely communication of these changes is important for ratepayers, particularly those who lease properties and need to plan for changes in rates liability. • Consistency with the rating categories in the model financial statements is essential to ensure clarity and comparability. Consideration should also extend to service rates and charges, including transparency around Fire Service Rate contributions. Additionally, any historical data provided should include context, such as valuation changes, policy shifts, and economic conditions, rather than presenting raw totals.
<p>Establishing the architecture for improving - over time - council strategic direction-setting and planning, underpinned by a stronger focus on community engagement and wellbeing</p>	<p>The proposal for council strategic plans to identify community wellbeing priority and specifying strategies for achieving is an update to the current Strategic Plan section. It is not an additional plan. It highlights identifying community wellbeing priorities as new wording, but this would align to the current pillars and actions. Interesting that wellbeing is only mentioned one other time in the amendment where it has updated the Role of council from Functions and Powers (Section 20 of the current Act).</p> <p>The City already has a Community Engagement Framework (due for review in 2027) and a Community Engagement Policy.</p> <p>At the same time, we are also developing a dedicated Communications & Engagement Guide.</p>
<p>Introducing temporary advisors for councils</p>	<p>There is no doubt that there are times when, for various reasons, a council may lose its way in terms of its focus on the necessary role that it plays for its community. It could be because of poor strategic decision making, relationship breakdowns between key leaders, employee and or Elected Member misconduct (and the like).</p> <p>The ability to appoint a temporary advisor to a council to provide advice and recommend governance</p>

	<p>improvements to that council would provide a 'light touch' means of addressing the identified problems, rather than resorting to an expensive and time-consuming Board of Inquiry process.</p> <p>Certainly, an inquiry will still have its place for the most serious of circumstances, but the advisor would be a useful tool to work with existing councils to identify and address problems, before more serious interventions are required.</p>
<p>Enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the Code of Conduct complaints handling framework.</p>	<p>As a general overriding statement, the Code of Conduct Panel system needs to have more checks and balances whereby precedents are considered, and consistency is achieved in respect to the handling and determination of complaints. Greater professionalism is required across the board.</p> <p>It is suggested that all complaints could be directed to TASCAT to provide the level of consistency and professionalism that is needed.</p>
<p>Supporting provisions for remote attendance at closed council meetings, aligning with anticipated updates to the Meeting Regulations.</p>	<p>In respect to the proposal to allow Elected Members to attend meetings remotely the following comments are offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability for Elected Members to participated in Council and committee meetings remotely should not be extended to close Council and committee meetings. • The range of circumstances that an individual councillor may attend Council and/or committee meetings remotely should be restricted to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ill health or incapacity ○ Caregiving responsibilities ○ Localised natural disasters or emergencies ○ Work commitments
<p>Requirement for a Council to develop and maintain a Workplace development strategy</p>	<p>In respect to the requirement for councils to develop a Workforce Development Plan, the City of Hobart operates the One Hobart Program, which aims at building a constructive organisational culture which is consistent with the proposed reform.</p>