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Your Ref: SF7493

4 April 2025

Minister for Local Government  
Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC Office of Local Government  
GPO Box 123  
HOBART TAS 7001

Via email to: [lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Vincent

### **Local Government Electoral Bill**

The City of Launceston thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper.

Council previously provided feedback on the 2022 Local Government Elections and that information contributes to the submission endorsed by Council at the meeting held 27 March 2025, as outlined below.

<b>The future format of local government elections in Tasmania</b>	
<b>Scenario A: change to voting in person as the primary means of participation</b>	
Move to universal attendance elections with a weeklong polling period, or a polling day, including an extended pre-poll period and postal voting for persons on the supplementary electoral roll.  Telephone voting would be made available for electors with barriers to participation or who are interstate or overseas.	The City of Launceston supports community engagement from the voting public, and the increased opportunity for all electors to participate.
<b>Scenario B: flexible additions to the status quo (a 'hybrid' model)</b>	
Provide for a 'hybrid' postal model where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• all electors are mailed a ballot and candidate information pamphlet</li><li>• there is a minimum four week polling period, enabling the earlier return of postal votes</li><li>• there are more issuing places in each municipality, to enable the hand return of ballots by electors until the close of polls where ballots may be returned to issuing places until the close of polls.</li><li>• Telephone voting would be made available for electors with barriers to participation or who are interstate or overseas.</li></ul>	<p>Council has previously stated that the postal system needs review. Local Government elections should be a mix of on the day and postal voting as per State Government elections.</p> <p>The City of Launceston supports community engagement and the increased opportunity for all electors to participate however, the 2022 local government elections demonstrated that far too many people were reliant on visiting to Town Hall without adequate support from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.</p> <p>While an extended polling period may assist the earlier return of postal votes, voter fatigue</p>

	and/or complacency should also be considered when the election process is extended, resulting in disengagement in this democratic process.
<b>What would these scenarios cost?</b>	
<p>Tasmania's 2022 local government elections cost \$9.32 per elector, an increase of 34 per cent over the 2018 elections (\$6.92 per elector). This is largely attributable to the very large increase in participation (driving increased postal and counting costs) and the costs associated with the returning, processing and counting those additional ballots. By comparison, the 2024 Tasmanian state election cost \$12.37 per ballot.</p> <p>Jurisdictional comparisons demonstrate a wide range in potential costs. 2021 local government elections in the Northern Territory and New South Wales (which are primarily run on an attendance model) incurred costs of \$15.10 and \$29 per elector, respectively (noting that a range of factors may underpin that, including higher participation at the NSW elections).</p> <p>It is not possible to quantify with confidence the costs of future Tasmanian local government elections under either alternative. It is reasonable to assume that the slower pace at which electors would take to complete their votes, and so move through the polling place, would increase costs of attendance elections relative to state elections; as may the provision of a polling period, rather than polling day (though this would vary with operational decisions regarding the number and distribution of polling places). As at present, local government elections are a more complex counting process than for state elections, though as discussed elsewhere in this document, this could be addressed by adopting an alternative means of selecting the deputy mayor.</p> <p>It is similarly difficult to quantify costs of the hybrid election model, though this is anticipated to be less than for attendance elections. Postal services are expected to be more costly over time as overall letter volumes decline.</p> <p>Under either alternative, the costs of local government elections are expected to</p>	<p>Scenario A (change to voting in person as the primary means of participation) and scenario B (flexible additions to the status quo (a 'hybrid' model), attract additional costs as 'options' are provided over extended period, however the City of Launceston does not support increased costs at any price.</p> <p>While increasing costs are a reality of any local government administration, those costs should be proportional and relevant, representing value for money for the municipality.</p> <p>Feedback provided after the 2022 is reiterated in that, the postal voting process presented significant resourcing challenges for the City of Launceston particularly towards the latter days of the polling period. The City of Launceston committed several employees to administering what was effectively a polling booth, with lines of people stretching out the door for much of the last couple of days.</p> <p>The volume of voters that attended Town Hall, especially in the last week before polling closed, impacted the City of Launceston's regular stream of customers wishing to visit the Council's building at the Customer Service Counter (feedback provided post 2022 elections by some members of the public).</p> <p>Resourcing should be considered in terms of human capital as well as monetary expenditure.</p>

increase at the next ordinary elections and beyond.	
<b>Potential new directions: who should vote in local government elections, and how should we elect the deputy mayor?</b> <i>This section of the discussion paper seeks feedback on two reform options for consultation, which if adopted, would depart from agreed reforms in response to the Local Government Legislative Review, namely:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a continuation of non-citizen voting (limited within certain parameters)</li> <li>• a move away from the popular election of deputy mayors.</li> </ul>	
<b>Reforming the franchise: should non-citizens enjoy a continuing entitlement to vote at local government elections?</b>	
If this entitlement were to continue, it is proposed a person's ordinary place of residence must have been in Tasmania for the 12 months prior to making an application for enrolment (or otherwise must own property in Tasmania in a personal capacity). This would be, in effect, a 'non-citizens' electoral category.	Support
<b>Reforming the entitlement to nominate as councillor</b>	
If an entitlement for non-citizens to vote is preserved, require that a person must appear on the House of Assembly electoral roll to be eligible to hold the office of councillor, in addition to appearing on that roll or the supplementary electoral roll at an address in the municipal area.	Support. Postal voting should be offered as a supporting function for people unable to physically attend to vote, e.g. voters travelling interstate/overseas, the elderly.
<b>Remove the direct election of the deputy mayor</b>	
Instead, the councillors are to elect the deputy mayor at the first ordinary meeting of the term of the council. Otherwise, the role of deputy mayor could be removed entirely or made optional in favour of provision for acting mayors, including supplementary allowances.	Support. It is proposed that the role of Deputy Mayor is filled from within the Council as voted by the elected peer group.
<b>Local Government Elections: technical reforms</b> <i>Thirty-three technical reforms are presented below, under five themes:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. a more flexible and accessible format for local government elections</li> <li>2. a better franchise for electors and changes to eligibility to run for office</li> <li>3. better quality public information at elections</li> <li>4. strengthened donations disclosure and electoral advertising requirements</li> <li>5. other changes to support the integrity of elections.</li> </ol>	
<b>1. A more flexible and accessible format for local government elections</b>	
<b>Reform 1:</b> reduce prescription in the statutory framework to enable the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to approve the electoral process.	Support
<b>Reform 2:</b> enable the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to approve procedures for voting, including by telephone and electronic means, for interstate and overseas electors and electors with impediments to ordinary participation, or for other classes of person prescribed by regulation.	Support
<b>Reform 3:</b> legislate that the Tasmanian Electoral Commission is required to approve procedures in accordance with universal	Support

franchise principles, namely all electors, including electors with additional barriers to participation, are to be afforded an opportunity to vote in an independent, secret and verifiable manner.	
<b>Reform 4:</b> require the Electoral Commissioner to publish after each election a statement on the implementation of the accessibility principles, after information, including relevant statistics and initiatives undertaken to promote universal participation in the election.	Support - this ensures that the Electoral Commissioner is meeting the needs of the community through a reviewable process.
<b>2. A better franchise for electors and changes to eligibility to run for office</b>	
<b>Reform 5:</b> increase the number of elector signatures required to support a notice of nomination to the lesser of 30 or one per cent of the number of electors in the municipal area.	Support
<b>Reform 6:</b> move administration of the 'general managers' roll' from councils to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, including administration of the process through which land occupier and corporate nominee (supplementary electoral roll) electors are to enrol.	Support
<b>Reform 7:</b> provide a definition for the purposes of 'occupier' of land that establishes an occupier holds a leasehold interest or licence over land, and/or the person's ordinary place of residence is in the municipal area.	Support
<b>Reform 8:</b> provide that a person seeking enrolment on the supplementary roll must complete a land occupier declaration and provide documentation of the leasehold or licence over land, or evidence of their period of residence in Tasmania to the satisfaction of the Commissioner.	Support
<b>Reform 9:</b> implement the 'one person, one vote' principle and require a nominee of a corporate landowner or occupier of land may nominate one natural person who is an officeholder of the company to be its nominee.	Strongly support
<b>Reform 10:</b> provide that all intending candidates (other than incumbent councillors) must complete a prescribed program of pre-nomination training prior to their submission of a notice of nomination.	Strongly support
<b>3. Better quality public information at elections</b>	
<b>Reform 11:</b> require that the TEC provides all people submitting a notice of nomination the opportunity to provide a candidate information statement (in an approved format, providing prescribed information) and the Tasmanian	The City of Launceston supports the need for an enhanced system for nominations and proposes: 1- for elected members, remove the two-step process however, without a photograph or

Electoral Commission is to publish candidate information through appropriate means.	biography, the nomination is not accepted. 2 - non-elected members be required to undertake a pre-nomination course or training via the nomination platform i.e. a nomination does not proceed without having completed a pre-nomination course or training.
<b>Reform 12:</b> provide that the Director of Local Government may provide a statement to be published by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission alongside the candidate information.	Support
<b>Reform 13:</b> establish that nomination by a registered party is to be included in the information published by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, and printed on the ballot paper, with the candidate's name to be printed alongside the name of the registered party.	Don't support
<b>Reform 14:</b> provide for candidates whose nomination form is not lodged by a registered party to request to be identified with a group name.	Don't support
<b>4. Strengthened donations disclosure and electoral advertising requirements</b>	
<b>Reform 15:</b> corresponding to the Electoral Act Review Final Report and the amended section 197 of the <i>Electoral Act 2004</i> , introduce new prohibitions on the dissemination of misleading and deceptive statements.	Support
<b>Reform 16:</b> remove the general restriction upon a person, without the consent of the candidate or intending candidate, printing, publishing or distributing any electoral advertising that contains the name, photograph or a likeness of a candidate or intending candidate at an election; other than 'how-to-vote' material intended to instruct an elector in the completion of their vote.	Don't support
<b>Reform 17:</b> clarify the definition of electoral advertising.	Support
<b>Reform 18:</b> provide that only a candidate, intending candidate, or a person so nominated in the notice of nomination by a candidate, may incur electoral expenditure; and provide that expenditure by other persons to promote or procure the election of a candidate or intending candidate is an offence.	Support
<b>Reform 19:</b> institute authorisation requirements for electoral advertising and associated material.	Support
<b>Reform 20:</b> replace advertising expenditure limits with a general expenditure limit, with reference to the expenditure limit for Legislative Council elections under the	Support

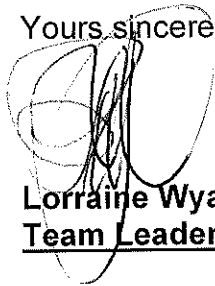
<i>Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023.</i>	
<b>Reform 21:</b> require that a candidate is to report expenditure made on their behalf in their electoral expenditure return, in the same manner as personal expenditure. The present requirement to attribute, in full, to each candidate so featured the value of advertising featuring multiple candidates (for instance, multiple party candidates) will be retained.	Support
<b>Reform 22:</b> prohibit any person from incurring any expenditure for or on behalf of a registered party with a view to promoting or procuring the election of a candidate or intending candidate.	Support
<b>Reform 23:</b> maintain the \$50 threshold for the disclosure of gifts and benefits and extend this requirement from incumbent councillors to all candidates, who will be required to lodge two candidate donation returns with the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. The new Bill will also require the publication of initial donations disclosures on the Commission's website during the polling period and until the certificate of election.	Support
<b>Reform 24:</b> provide that it is an offence for a person other than a candidate or intending candidate to accept a gift or benefit for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate, or for the dominant purpose of influencing the way electors vote in an election; and that it is an offence to make a gift or donation to a person other than a candidate or intending candidate for this purpose.	Support
<b>Reform 25:</b> provide that it is an offence for a councillor, intending candidate or candidate, at any time, to accept a donation for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate or intending candidate at a local government election: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• over \$50, including services or goods valued in kind, without recording the basic details of that donor</li> <li>• over \$50 in cash</li> <li>• over \$50 from a foreign donor.</li> </ul>	Support
<b>5. Other changes to support the integrity of elections</b>	
<b>Reform 26:</b> provide that a local government election or by-election may not be held such that the polling period overlaps the date of a Tasmanian or Australian Government parliamentary election.	Support
<b>Reform 27:</b> provide the Tasmanian Electoral Commission with powers of investigation.	Support
<b>Reform 28:</b> alignment of electoral offences and sanctions with the Electoral Act.	Support

<p><b>Reform 29:</b> provide a statutory caretaker framework, applying from the notice of election to the date of the issue of the certificate of election for all elections other than by-elections and countbacks.</p>	Support
<p><b>Reform 30:</b> provide that during the caretaker period, prohibit a council from making any major policy or financial decisions, namely decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relating to the appointment, reappointment, remuneration or termination of a general manager, other than a decision in respect of the appointment of an acting general manager under section 61B</li> <li>• committing the council to expenditure greater than one per cent of general and service rating and fees and charges revenue raised in the preceding financial year, or \$100,000, whichever is the larger</li> <li>• directing council resources in a manner intended, or likely to, influence voting at the election</li> <li>• relating to a matter the council considers it could reasonably defer until after the election period, other than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ decisions relating to a matter the council is required to determine in that period under statute</li> <li>○ decisions of a routine and operational nature.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Support
<p><b>Reform 31:</b> provide that during the caretaker period, it is an offence for a council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publish any material in any format which promotes any candidate or group of candidates for election, or otherwise seeks to influence voters in the election</li> <li>• publish material in relation to the election other than information to promote participation in the election and in relation to election process, or other material of a kind published by the Electoral Commissioner</li> <li>• make resources available to the advantage of any candidate, which are not equally available to all candidates for election.</li> </ul>	Support
<p><b>Reform 32:</b> provide that major policy or financial decisions of a council during the caretaker period are of no effect and provide that persons who incur loss or damage due to an ineffectual decision of a council, who acted in good faith, are entitled to recover compensation from the council.</p>	Support

**Reform 33:** increase the proportion of electors signing a petition required to compel a council to hold an elector poll to 20 per cent; while restricting the matters about which an elector poll may be held to matters with a legitimate connection to the exercise of a council's functions or powers or to the incorporation of the council, as determined by the council.

Support

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lorraine Wyatt', written over the printed name.

**Lorraine Wyatt**  
**Team Leader Executive Support**