

1 April 2025

Our ref.: Government Relations/State
Liaison; ss/ib

Doc. ID:

Office of Local Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet
PO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

Sent via email: lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

FEEDBACK ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BILL

I write to you in response to the proposed Local Government Electoral Bill, developed in response to the Local Government Legislation Review and as part of the Local Government Priority Reform Program 2024–26, and due to be drafted and introduced to Parliament later this year.

I note the Office of Local Government's Discussion Paper provided an overview of the proposed reforms and Bill and sought feedback from the community and local government sector. I also note that this first round of consultation will inform the development of draft legislation, which will then be released for further consultation in mid-2025.

The Central Coast Council considered the proposed Electoral Bill at a Council workshop on 31 March 2025, and submits the following feedback for consideration.

The future format of local government elections in Tasmania

The Discussion Paper presented two possible scenarios for the future format of voting in local government elections:

- Scenario A – attendance voting (polling day/week)
- Scenario B – hybrid postal ballot.

When considering the two proposed scenarios for the future voting format, the Council supports Scenario A – attendance voting, but with conditions.

Scenario A would align local government elections more closely with state and federal parliamentary elections, providing more consistency, and less confusion, for the electorate.

However, given that such a model is proposed to be funded entirely at the local government level, a one-week polling period cannot be supported, as the impost to councils would be too great.

Council would support Scenario A, on condition that the format was attendance voting limited to *one polling day*. Together with a pre-polling period, this would still provide flexibility and access to the electorate but would not over-burden the local government sector.

Preferably, sufficient levels of funding to support state-led changes to local government elections would be provided by the state to support the Tasmanian electorate and local government sector in delivery successful elections.

PO Box 220
19 King Edward Street
Ulverstone Tasmania 7315
Tel 03 6429 8900

admin@centralcoast.tas.gov.au
www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au

Non-citizen voting

The Council supports the proposal to continue non-citizen voting on condition that 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).

Entitlement to nominate as councillor

The Council supports the proposal to 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 general manager's roll, at an address in the municipal area of nomination.

Under this proposal, persons seeking nomination for office will be required to be on Tasmania's House of Assembly electoral roll, and as a result, be Australian citizens (or British subjects eligible to vote in parliamentary elections).

This change would bring Tasmania into alignment with current practice in Victoria and South Australia. The proposal, combined with the continuation of the wider franchise, is intended to balance the benefit of wider civic participation with the acknowledged risks of foreign influence of local government elections and decision-making.

It is also noted that the administration of the general manager's roll is proposed to be moved from councils to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and that it is anticipated this change will commence following the next ordinary local government elections in 2026.

Direct election of deputy mayor

The Council notes the change to the mode of election of the deputy mayor was proposed during Local Government Legislation Review but was not ultimately recommended as a final reform, as there was no clear or strong support for the change, from either councils or the community.

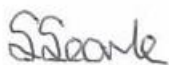
This issue remains difficult to reach a final decision on, as both the options present distinct advantages and disadvantages, of similar measure.

Given that the proposal to remove the direct election of the deputy mayor does not represent a clear and significant benefit, Council does not support the change at this time.

However, if the proposal is implemented and the deputy mayor is elected by fellow councillors at the first ordinary council meeting of the term, the Council would support the election of a deputy for the entire term, rather than provision for acting mayors throughout the term.

The Council support the intent of the proposed changes and look forward to the development of the draft Electoral Bill and further opportunity to provide more detailed feedback.

Yours sincerely



Samantha Searle
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Copy to LGAT – reception@lgat.tas.gov.au