Discussion paper

Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances

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# Executive summary

Tasmania’s local government system needs reform to ensure fair representation and adequate pay for councillors while keeping costs manageable for communities. This Discussion Paper proposes changes to the number of councillors and their allowances across Tasmania’s 29 councils, aiming to deliver more effective, equitable, and professional local governance. The reforms are designed to be cost-neutral overall, meaning no extra burden on ratepayers, and are open for public feedback until 7 November 2025.

## Why reform is needed

* **High number of councillors:** Tasmania has one of the highest numbers of councillors per person in Australia, which can lead to inefficiencies and, in some cases, undemocratic election outcomes where candidates win with very few votes.
* **Inconsistencies in representation:** Historical reviews of numbers targeted at a small number of councils, have left councils of similar size with different numbers of councillors, creating inequitable variations.
* **Low pay for councillors:** Current allowances do not reflect the growing complexity of councillors’ roles, discouraging diverse and talented candidates and indirectly limiting the time some councillors can devote to their duties.
* **Outdated system:** The current method for setting allowances, based on registered voters and operating revenue, has notable flaws - failing to account for population size or council responsibilities, and is susceptible to volatile changes from grant revenue.

## What we propose

The Government proposes a new, fair, and data-driven system to set councillor numbers and allowances, using factors like population, development activity, infrastructure, urbanisation, and road networks. Key changes include:

* **Fewer councillors**: Reducing the total number of councillors from 263 to 203, with councils having 9, 7, or 5 councillors based on their size and complexity.
* **Higher allowances**: Increasing councillor allowances by 14.25% on average, funded by savings from fewer councillors.
* **A fairer framework**: Aligning councillor numbers and pay to council responsibilities, ensuring equal pay for equal work and consistency across similar councils.
* **Ongoing reviews**: Establishing regular, four-yearly reviews to keep the system up-to-date and responsive to community needs.
* **Additional support**: Exploring whether to require councils to pay the 12% superannuation equivalent allowance into councillors’ super funds.

## Benefits of the reforms

* **Strengthened governance**: Fewer, better-paid councillors will assist in attracting skilled and diverse candidates, improving decision-making and professionalism.
* **Fairer pay**: Higher allowances reflect councillors’ growing responsibilities, supporting their commitment to communities.
* **Fair representation**: The new system ensures councils have the right number of councillors for their size and needs, reducing inconsistencies.
* **No extra cost**: Savings from fewer councillors will fund higher allowances, keeping the reforms cost-neutral for ratepayers overall.
* **Stronger democracy**: Higher election vote thresholds will enhance the legitimacy of elected councillors.
* **Future-proof system**: Regular reviews and stable metrics will keep the system fair and sustainable over time.

## How the reforms will happen

It is proposed the changes will be implemented through amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993* before the October 2026 local government elections. This approach ensures timely delivery and broad support from communities, councils, and Parliament. The reforms complement other improvements, such as councillor education, stronger sanctions for poor behaviour, paid parental leave, and flexible meeting attendance, to make the being a councillor more accessible and appealing.

## Your feedback matters

We want to hear from you to ensure these reforms meet community needs. Key questions include:

* Should we consider any strategies/guidance for council decision making where a quorum cannot be maintained?
* Should it be mandatory for councillors’ existing superannuation equivalent payments to be directed into a nominated superannuation fund?
* Should the methodology and ongoing review framework for councillor allowances and numbers be embedded in legislation?

Please share your views by 7 November 2025:

* **Email**: [lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au)
* **Post**: Office of Local Government, PO BOX 123, Hobart, Tasmania 7000

Your input will shape a stronger, fairer, and more effective local government system for Tasmania.

# Introduction

## The need for reform

The Government believes it is timely to reform councillor numbers and allowances across the local government sector. Having the ‘right’ number of councillors in a local government area (LGA) is critical to ensuring effective and efficient governance, representation, and service delivery. There is also a natural relationship between levels of representation and appropriate pay, reflecting the individual circumstances of a council, such as population size, geographic spread, asset value, and development activity. However, evidence suggests that Tasmania’s current system is not delivering the best outcomes for the sector or the broader community, and change is needed to achieve more efficient, effective, and consistent local representation.

## Current challenges

Tasmania has the highest number of local government elected officials per capita (except for the Northern Territory) and, particularly for smaller councils, some of the lowest comparable levels of remuneration. Since the *Local Government Act 1993* established the current 29-council system a small number of ad-hoc reviews of councillor numbers have led to inconsistent representation across municipalities. Similarly, councillor allowance reviews (conducted in 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2018) have been infrequent, with only minor changes since 2004 aside from annual indexation. This has resulted in allowances that do not reflect the increasing complexity of councillors’ roles, community expectations, or statutory responsibilities.

## Stakeholder feedback

During the Future of Local Government Review (FoLGR), the Local Government Board heard strong concerns that existing councillor allowances:

* do not encourage a diverse range of candidates to run for council
* fail to reflect the effort required, given the role’s growing demands
* may deter talented councillors and limit their ability to devote sufficient time to their duties.

A 2021 Australian National University study, cited by councils, found that low remuneration in New South Wales led to dissatisfaction, with 81% of councillors reporting their role as unrewarding[[1]](#footnote-2). In Tasmania, several high-profile councillors cited low allowances as a reason for not recontesting the 2022 elections.

## Balancing community needs

While higher councillor pay is widely supported, it must be balanced against community cost-of-living pressures and fiscal constraints to avoid unduly burdening Tasmanians. During FoLGR the Local Government Board noted that “…consideration should be given to how many elected representatives are needed to effectively serve the needs of a particular community, and the merits of having, for example, fewer councillors who are remunerated at a higher level versus a greater number of councillors on relatively lower allowances.” The Board recommended that, following any voluntary amalgamation program, the Tasmanian Government commission an independent review of councillor numbers and allowances to support a structural reset of the sector[[2]](#footnote-3).

## Government response

In its [Response to the Future of Local Government Review](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/405220/OLG-FLG-Response.pdf), the Government supported this recommendation in principle and committed to:

* Review allowances using the existing methodology for inclusion in the remade *Local Government (General) Regulations* by June 2025.
* Conduct a comprehensive review of councillor numbers and allowances after the October 2026 elections.

However, to ensure reforms support high-quality candidates for the 2026 elections and address strong sectoral advocacy for fairer pay, the Government is now proposing to bring forward its comprehensive review. This decision is driven by:

* the need to attract and retain high-quality candidates for the 2026 elections and beyond
* the current allowance methodology’s failure to deliver meaningful change for most councils
* the progression of the voluntary amalgamation program not precluding a review before the end of 2026
* strong sectoral advocacy for fairer remuneration in the immediate term.

## Supporting broader reforms

Through the [*Local Government Priority Reform Agenda 2024-26*](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/405219/OLG-FLG-Priority-Reform-Program.pdf), the Government is already making the councillor role more appealing and accessible by:

* introducing compulsory councillor education
* allowing remote meeting attendance in certain circumstances
* providingparental leave for councillors
* increasing the superannuation equivalent component of allowances by 3%, to 12%
* delivering stronger sanctions for serious councillor misconduct.

The proposed reforms to councillor numbers and allowances complement these changes, aiming to deliver better outcomes for councils and communities starting in late 2026.

# Reform proposal summary

This Discussion Paper presents a fair and structured approach to setting councillor numbers and allowances in Tasmania’s local government, and we seek your feedback to shape it. The proposal is detailed further in the sections below.

If taken forward, the proposed approach presented would see a reduction in elected members across Tasmania’s 29 councils and a fair increase in allowances for all elected members compared to their current remuneration, at no net cost to the Tasmanian community.

The proposal simplifies and aligns councillor numbers and pay based on clear, common factors, delivering consistency and fairness across councils.

In simple terms, the proposal would:

* Assign councils to one of three categories (9, 7, or 5 councillors) using a scoring system based on factors like population, infrastructure, development activity, and geographic size.
* Utilise six allowance categories, with pay levels set using the same scoring system to create fair ‘bands’ within each councillor category.
* Ensure consistent representation for similar councils, reducing the total number of councillors by 60 to 203 statewide.
* Use savings from fewer councillors to fund a cost-neutral 14.25% increase to all allowance bands (this increase being considered appropriate in the context of fewer councillors, and in recognition of the growing complexity and importance of the role of councillors).
* Create a sustainable model for regular reviews of councillor numbers and allowances every four years.
* Implement the new framework through amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*, streamlining the process without needing separate reviews.

# Key consultation issues

While the Government is seeking feedback on all aspects of the reform proposal, several issues relating to the operation of a new numbers and allowances framework have been identified where specific input is particularly welcomed.

## Quorum management

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| **Question –** Should the Government consider any strategies/guidance for council decision making where a quorum cannot be maintained?  For councils with five councillors, maintaining quorums may occasionally be challenging if multiple councillors are absent, but proposed reforms like flexible meeting attendance aim to ensure effective decision-making.  While there have been no observable issues in five or six councillor councils in other jurisdictions, a quorum may still be impacted in rare instances where there are a number of absences and/or conflicts of interest which preclude voting on a matter.  It is noted the Government’s broader reform agenda seeks to make council attendance more flexible and accessible, which should limit or reduce absences.  However, it is also noted that section 67 of the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* allows councils to make decisions in an ‘alternative manner’ where a quorum cannot be maintained due to a number of councillors having a conflict of interest in a matter. This includes:   * resolving to split the matter into 2 or more separate parts, so that a quorum can be maintained for each separate part * making prior decisions on component parts of the matter at a meeting for which a quorum can be maintained, before deciding the overall matter at a meeting for which a quorum can be maintained.   Feedback is sought on whether a similar provision should be included in Tasmania’s Local Government Act, where the broader numbers and allowances reform proposal proceeds. |

## Superannuation

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| --- |
| **Question –** Should the *Local Government Act 1993* be amended to require councils to pay a 12% superannuation equivalent payment from allowances into a councillor’s nominated superannuation fund?  Councillors are not regarded as employees for taxation and superannuation purposes. This means councils are not obliged to pay superannuation contributions on behalf of councillors. It is currently an option open to councillors (or indeed councils by resolution) to self-manage any voluntary contributions, should they wish to.  Since 2004, Tasmanian councillors have received a 9% superannuation equivalent payment as part of their allowances (increased to 12% from June 2025). However, there is no requirement for this amount to be paid into a superannuation fund (even though councillors can make voluntary contributions).  This has led to a general misunderstanding that councillors do not receive any allowances in lieu of super, which would be mitigated by the requirement for the equivalent amount to be paid into a fund. |

## Setting the foundation for future reviews

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| --- |
| **Question –** Should the methodology and ongoing review framework for councillor allowances and numbers be embedded in legislation to provide certainty and transparency to the sector and community?  There are deficiencies with the current processes for reviewing councillor numbers and allowances - including a lack of structure and transparency around the scope, timing and conduct of regular reviews.  The framework proposed in this paper provides the opportunity to provide certainty around future reviews and transparency into how they are to occur.  The Government is considering changes to the Act to include the methodology and establish a mandatory schedule for regular reviews (for example, once every term of council). This would see the re-application of the methodology to councils on a regular basis, ensuring council numbers and allowances remain fair and equitable on an absolute and relative basis over time in response to demographic and other changes. |

Submissions are open for eight weeks until 7 November 2025, and can be made:

* by email to [lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au)
* in writing to the Office of Local Government, PO BOX 123, Hobart Tasmania 7000.

# Detailed exploration: the case for a new framework

## Overrepresentation on a national scale, and democratic impacts

Tasmania has the second highest proportion (after the Northern Territory) of councillors per head of population in Australia. Tasmania’s small, dispersed population contributes to this, but aligning representation with other jurisdictions can enhance fairness and efficiency.

**Figure 1 - Average population per councillor – jurisdictional comparison**

| **Jurisdiction** | **Number of councils** | **Number of councillors[[3]](#footnote-4)** | **Population (ABS 2021)** | **Population per councillor** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NSW | 128 | 1259 | 8,072,163 | 6412 |
| Vic | 79 | 618 | 6,503,491 | 10523 |
| QLD | 77 | 600\* | 5,156,138 | 8594 |
| WA | 139 | 1200\* | 2,660,026 | 2217 |
| SA | 68 | 630 | 1,781,516 | 2828 |
| Tas | 29 | 263 | 557,571 | 2120 |
| NT | 17 | 159 | 232,605 | 1463 |

While local democratic representation is undoubtedly important, there are democratic and financial impacts associated with overrepresentation. Existing levels of representation in Tasmania, particularly in instances of recounts, can lead to undemocratic outcomes, where candidates can be elected with very few primary votes.

[**Appendix B, figure 4**](#_Appendix_B_-) shows the deidentified results of all 27 recounts undertaken since 2022 – including the total number of ballots submitted and the number and percentage of first preference votes achieved in the 2022 local government elections. Of the recounts since the 2022 elections there was one candidate being elected to a small council on 17 first preference votes and another in a large urban council who received 0.89% of the total first preference votes in that municipality. This calls into question the democratic mandate and legitimacy of some elected members and suggests benefits of reforming councillor numbers is needed to ‘lift the bar’ for election to office.

## Representational inconsistencies caused by historic, ad-hoc numbers reviews

Since the establishment of Tasmania’s current system of 29 councils in 1993 there have been several reviews of levels of representation in local government. These have occurred infrequently, have not captured the entire sector, and delivered piecemeal change.

The last of these were a series of councillor number reviews undertaken by the Local Government Board in the early 2010s. These reviews were opt-in and saw a small number (9) of participating councils reduce their number of elected representatives by between 1 and 3. This has created a legacy of inconsistencies in representation, where councils of broadly equivalent size, scale and complexity now have substantially different councillor numbers. For example, Devonport City Council reduced its numbers from 12 to 9 in 2013, having the same number of councillors as King Island despite the obvious discrepancies between their respective populations (26,989 vs 1,662).

Having a consistent framework for establishing an appropriate representational range which is applied to all councils will help, in the first instance, reset these inconsistencies, while in the future create an enduring, equitable and robust model for the democratic representation of Tasmanian communities.

Below shows the councils which reduced their numbers in 2012 and 2013, and by how many:

Central Coast – 12 to 9

Devonport – 12 to 9

Derwent Valley – 9 to 8

Glamorgan-Spring Bay – 9 to 8

Glenorchy City – 12 to 10

Kingborough – 12 to 10

Southern Midlands – 9 to 7

Tasman – 9 to 7

Waratah-Wynyard – 10 to 8

Because of these historical reductions, under the proposed reforms the councils above see only minor representational adjustments, such that they achieve reasonable alignment with comparable councils. These councils will see lower proportional savings following an increase in allowances. However, it is recognised that these councils have incurred community savings over time from their reduced number of councillors since 2012 and 2013.

## An outdated councillor allowances framework contributes to unfair pay

Reviews of councillor allowances have occurred relatively infrequently over the past 25 years (2000, 2004, 2008 and 2018), and since the introduction of the existing framework for determining councillor allowances in 2004, there have been only minor changes (annual indexation) to the allowances paid to councillors.

Councils are currently allocated to allowance categories based on a formula of **total voters multiplied by operating revenue divided by 1 million** to derive a score. It is recognised that there are a number of weaknesses with this framework, namely:

* Total voters as a metric does not reflect that councillors represent the interests and make decisions impacting all residents of their municipality. Therefore, the use of total population is considered a better indicator of representational need.
* Operating revenue is impacted by financial assistance and other capital grants paid to councils and is subject to notable year-on-year fluctuations. The five-year average value of approved development applications and written down value of infrastructure assets are more stable indicators of the complexity of a council’s role.
* While not applied annually, the framework uses only data for a given financial year, therefore is vulnerable to sizeable fluctuations in operating revenue.
* The formula does not recognise the relationship between levels of representation and pay as indicators of the complexity and workload required on individual councils.

# Detailed methodology: a new framework for determining numbers and allowances

The Office of Local Government has developed a proposed formula to determine appropriate councillor numbers and allowances based on key demographic, financial and geographic metrics and broad alignment with levels of representation in other jurisdictions.

Based on their score against the metrics, councils are allocated to one of three categories, with either nine, seven or five elected representatives.

Importantly, the formula recognises not all factors contribute equally to representational need. It adopts a three-tiered approach, recognising population as the primary determinant of representational need, followed by complexity of role, and geographic factors.

The three tiers – and the metrics and benchmarks that determine a council’s score under each – are explained below.

| **Tier** | **Metric** | **Source** | **Rationale** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 (scores 1 – 5) | Metric 1.1 – population size | Australian Bureau of Statistics | Population is the primary factor for determining communities’ representational needs. While electors influence the outcomes of elections, councillors are responsible for representing the entire population of their LGAs, justifying population (rather than simply voting age population) as the appropriate metric. |
| 2 (scores 1 – 3) | Metric 2.1 – total value of approved development applications (5-year average) | Councils Consolidated Data Collection | The value of development applications approved by a council acts a proxy measure for the complexity of a councillor’s role by indicating workload, technical demands, community engagement needs, and strategic oversight required. This figure has been used over the total number of development applications received as the dollar value better reflects complexity, as opposed to workload (e.g. it is a more complex task assessing a smaller number of higher value applications than a higher number of straightforward applications, many of which may in fact be delegated). |
| Metric 2.2 – total written down value of infrastructure assets | Councils Consolidated Data Collection | As with development applications, higher infrastructure values signal greater complexity in the role of councillor, indicating a larger asset base to maintain, fund, and plan for. This figure includes property, plant and equipment, roads and bridges, and stormwater infrastructure. |
| 3 (scores 0.5 – 1.5) | Metric 3.1 – urbanisation (based on the Australian Classification of Local Governments | Australian Classification of Local Governments | Captures the blend of population, density, and geographic factors, while ensuring alignment with the ACLG’s focus on population, density, and urban/rural character. By integrating these inputs, the model ensures comparability with other Australian jurisdictions while addressing Tasmania’s unique geography and small population. |
| Metric 3.2 – kilometre of sealed roads (urban and rural) | Councils Consolidated Data Collection | Provides as an indication of the geographic dispersion of communities within an LGA, contributing to a need for representational ‘spread’. Length of sealed roads is used as an indicator for population distribution as opposed to simple land area size, which in some geographically large councils can (and in many cases does) include national park, uninhabited and/or un-serviced land.  Sealed roads are used to indicate that populations are predominately clustered along sealed roads. From a complexity perspective, the asset values metric (2.2) includes the value of both sealed and non-sealed roads. |

## Ensuring no adverse representational outcomes

It is considered that the number categories capture the appropriate number of elected representatives commensurate to the scale and complexity of their required role and functions. Importantly, these categories ensure Tasmanian councils are broadly aligned with other jurisdictions on a councillor head of population basis and generally consistent with national levels of local representation.

Further, the three categories with odd numbers ensure that there is no risk of tied voting outcomes. This concern has been expressed by the sector, and nationally is considered by the Victorian Electoral Commission in the conduct of their local government representation reviews. All other jurisdictions (except Victoria) have councils with an even number of councillors, however this is generally a minority of councils. For example, only 24 of NSW’s 127 councils have an even number of councillors, ranging from eight to twelve.

Nine councillors is a common level of representation for medium sized urban councils like Hobart, Launceston, Clarence, Glenorchy and Kingborough. Almost half of NSW’s councils have 9 councillors – 11 of these with populations over 50,000 – including large metropolitan councils such as Camden with 135,000 people and Canada Bay with 91,385 people[[4]](#footnote-5).

It is also acknowledged there may be concerns around councils with five councillors having a low quorum threshold. The Government is currently delivering reforms to support flexible meeting attendance (the ability to meet remotely) in prescribed circumstances. This should support an overall uplift in attendance at meetings.

Further, the Government has examined whether there are any notable representational issues in five councillor councils in Victoria (there are six – with details of these councils and their population and geographic size in Appendix B, figure 3). Consultation with Victoria has indicated no notable or reported issues with the level of representation in these councils – in terms of governance, representation or otherwise. While under the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020,* the Minister for Local Government may appoint municipal monitors to councils experiencing governance issues to report back to observe, provide advice and report back to the Minister on governance issues. No monitors have been appointed to any five councillor councils.

## Aligning numbers with allowances

While historically councils have been allocated to allowance categories based on a formula of **total voters multiplied by operating revenue divided by 1 million** to derive a score, the use of this formula is not required under statute.

Instead, it is proposed that allowance categories be determined based on the same score which determines numbers – creating a robust, cohesive and consistent formula for numbers and allowances. This will better deliver an important driver for the reform: equal pay for equal work.

This approach also recognises and resolves the following weaknesses with the existing data inputs:

* Total voters as a metric does not reflect that councillors represent the views of all residents of their municipality, therefore the use of total population is considered a better indicator of representational need.
* Operating revenue is impacted by financial assistance and other capital grants paid to councils, and is subject to notable year-on-year fluctuations. The five-year average value of approved development applications and written down value of infrastructure assets are more stable indicators of the complexity of a council’s role.

To ensure a smooth transition and maintain fairness, the proposal utilises six allowance categories, aligning them as ‘bands’ within the new councillor number categories. This approach links allowances to council responsibilities, encouraging sustainable growth in metrics like population and infrastructure, which reflect community strength and development.

In addition to this:

* Councillor allowances in each band will increase by 14.25%, funded by savings from reducing councillor numbers, to better recognise the growing complexity of elected representative roles. The reform would be , implemented immediately after the October 2026 elections.
* To support small rural councils facing a reduction from nine to five councillors under the new formula, the proposal eliminates the smallest current allowance category (category 7) and moves these councils to the next category (category 6). This ensures councillors receive a fairer, higher allowance that better reflects their increased scale of responsibilities, while savings from fewer councillors deliver value to communities.

The detailed scoring formula and rubric for determining numbers and allowances is as follows.

## Scoring formula

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tier** | **Metric** | **Scoring Benchmark (low to high)** | | | | |
| 1 | Population size | <15000  1 point | 15,000–25,000  2 points | 25,000-35,000  3 points | 35,000-55,000  4 points | 55,000+  5 points |
| 2 | 5-year average value of approved development applications ($’000’000) | <50  1 point | 50-100  2 points | 100+  3 points |  |  |
| Written down value of infrastructure assets ($’000’000) | <150  1 point | 150-399  2 points | 400+  3 points |  |  |
| 3 | Urbanisation (Simplified ACLG) | Rural Small  0.5 points | Rural Large  1 point | Urban  1.5 points |  |  |
| Km of sealed road (Urban and Rural) | <100km  0.5 points | 100–249km  1 point | >250km  1.5 points |  |  |

## Scoring rubric

| **New Category** | **Councillor numbers** | **Score** | **Allowance band** | **Allowance ($)[[5]](#footnote-6)** | **Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 9 | 12+ | 1.1 | 51366 | 14+ |
| 1.2 | 41585 | 12– 13.5 |
| 2 | 7 | 5 – 12 | 2.1 | 31491 | 10 – 11.5 |
| 2.2 | 21404 | 7.5 – 9.5 |
| 2.3 | 17888 | 5 – 7 |
| 3 | 5 | <5 | 3.1 | 15064 | <5 |

**Importantly** the allowance for each band does not materially change from the existing allowance categories, (just the formula for determining council’s allocation) and is aligned as follows:

| **Proposed allowance band** | **Equivalent current allowance category (in the General Regulations)** | **Allowance ($) (reflecting the 14.25% increase)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1.1 | 1 | 51366 |
| 1.2 | 2 | 41585 |
| 2.1 | 3 | 31491 |
| 2.2 | 4 | 21404 |
| 2.3 | 5 | 17888 |
| 3.1 | 6 | 15064 |

## Summary of changes to allowance and numbers

Below shows the proposed councillor numbers and allowances based on the formula. This approach would see a net reduction in councillors across the sector by 60, from 263 to 203. **(Appendix A contains detailed scoring)**:

| **Numbers category** | **Allowance band** | **Council** | **Score** | **Current number of crs** | **New number of crs** | **Cr change** | **New cr allowance rate ($)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 1.1 | Clarence | 14.0 | 12 | 9 | -3 | 51,366 |
| Hobart | 14.0 | 12 | 9 | -3 | 51,366 |
| Launceston | 14.0 | 12 | 9 | -3 | 51,366 |
| 1.2 | Glenorchy | 13.0 | 10 | 9 | -1 | 41,585 |
| Kingborough | 13.0 | 10 | 9 | -1 | 41,585 |
| 2 | 2.1 | Burnie | 10.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 31,491 |
| Central Coast | 10.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 31,491 |
| Devonport | 10.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 31,491 |
| West Tamar | 10.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 31,491 |
| 2.2 | Northern Midlands | 9.5 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 21,404 |
| Sorell | 9.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 21,404 |
| Circular Head | 8.5 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 21,404 |
| Meander Valley | 8.5 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 21,404 |
| Huon Valley | 8.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 21,404 |
| Brighton | 7.5 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 21,404 |
| Waratah-Wynyard | 7.5 | 8 | 7 | -1 | 21,404 |
| 2.3 | Break O’Day | 7.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 17,888 |
| Derwent Valley | 7.0 | 8 | 7 | -1 | 17,888 |
| Latrobe | 7.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 17,888 |
| Dorset | 6.5 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 17,888 |
| Kentish | 6.5 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 17,888 |
| Glamorgan-Spring Bay | 5.5 | 8 | 7 | -1 | 17,888 |
| George Town | 5.0 | 9 | 7 | -2 | 17,888 |
| Southern Midlands | 5.0 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 17,888 |
| 3 | 3.1 | Central Highlands | 4.5 | 9 | 5 | -4 | 15,064 |
| West Coast | 4.5 | 9 | 5 | -4 | 15,064 |
| Flinders | 4.0 | 7 | 5 | -2 | 15,064 |
| King Island | 4.0 | 9 | 5 | -4 | 15,064 |
| Tasman | 4.0 | 7 | 5 | -2 | 15,064 |

As noted previously, a flat **14.25%** increase to all allowance categories delivers a true cost-neutral increase, with only seven councils bearing costs due to allowance band progression or historical reductions necessitating a smaller proportional reduction of councillors. Individual costs and savings are as follows:

| **Council[[6]](#footnote-7)** | **Costs/savings ($)** | **Cr allowance increase (including any category)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Clarence | -50671 | 41.12% |
| Hobart | 77217 | 14.25% |
| Launceston | 77217 | 14.25% |
| Glenorchy | -10282 | 14.25% |
| Kingborough | -10282 | 14.25% |
| Burnie | 27632 | 14.25% |
| Central Coast | 27632 | 14.25% |
| Devonport | 27632 | 14.25% |
| West Tamar | 27632 | 14.25% |
| Brighton | 18781 | 14.25% |
| Circular Head | -19407 | 36.69% |
| Huon Valley | 18781 | 14.25% |
| Meander Valley | 18781 | 14.25% |
| Northern Midlands | 18781 | 14.25% |
| Sorell | 18781 | 14.25% |
| Waratah-Wynyard | 47 | 14.25% |
| Break O’Day | 15696 | 14.25% |
| Derwent Valley | 39 | 14.25% |
| Dorset | 15696 | 14.25% |
| George Town | 15696 | 14.25% |
| Glamorgan-Spring Bay | -27792 | 35.67% |
| Kentish | -14607 | 35.67% |
| Latrobe | 15696 | 14.25% |
| Southern Midlands | -40977 | 35.67% |
| Central Highlands | 27578 | 30.57% |
| Flinders | 4504 | 30.57% |
| King Island | 27578 | 30.57% |
| Tasman | 4504 | 30.57% |
| West Coast | 43346 | 14.25% |
| **Total savings** | 355226 |  |

# Ongoing sustainability of the framework

It is important the framework is robust and provides a fair and objective assessment of the complexity of a councillor’s role at any given time without susceptibility to year-to-year volatility swings caused by short-term data anomalies or outliers.

The data metrics and scoring thresholds have been developed with this in mind, so that councils do not experience huge movements or fluctuations in their scoring (and therefore councillor numbers and allowances) due to outlying results.

Population, value of infrastructure assets, and length of sealed roads are indicators of financial health and sustainability of an LGA, which are expected for most councils to grow at a sustainable pace over time. This ensures councils can move between numbers categories and allowance bands over time where there is demonstrated growth and development within their municipality.

The value of development applications is susceptible to sizeable fluctuations, however the impacts of this are mitigated both by the highest score (3) being capped at $100 million, and by using a five-year average figure. For example, the Robbins Island wind farm development means Circular Head Council’s value of approved DAs for the 2022-23 financial year was at $1.3 billion, with a five-year average of $355 million. The points allocated to Circular Head under the model are capped at 3, mitigating any adverse distortion to the scoring framework (including regression when this figure drops off the five-year period).

Similarly, the use of urbanisation as a metric stabilises councils on the lower end of the scoring spectrum from unnecessarily fluctuating between five and seven councillors. For example, an urban large council which achieves the lowest score will always have seven councillors – reflecting this is an appropriate base level of representation for a council of this nature.

The framework has been rigorously tested against population trends and economic scenarios, ensuring councils maintain stable representation and fair allowances over time, supporting sustainable community governance.

# Implementing the framework

Minor legislative amendments will be required to Schedule 3 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and Schedule 4 of the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2025* to implement changes to councillor numbers and allowances resulting from this framework.

Under the Local Government Act, the Minister is permitted to recommend the Governor make changes to councillor numbers by Order in response to a report from the Local Government Board. Similarly, historical reviews of councillor allowances have been undertaken by a Board of Inquiry, with recommendations provided to the Minister for actioning at their discretion.

However, it is intended the implementation of the framework – including those to allowances and numbers – will be delivered by an amendment Bill. The key reasons for this approach are:

* it will ensure shared buy-in and support for the framework is received across the local government sector, communities and Parliament
* the reform has desired outcomes and objectives from its inception (including implementation of the detailed methodology), which can be better retained through a Government led, targeted review
* the review is unencumbered by the costly and time-consuming statutory burdens faced by a Local Government Board. This ensures the review can be delivered before the 2026 local government elections
* the review contemplates other statutory reforms, including quorum management and superannuation provisions, which would need to be delivered through primary legislation anyways.

A few councils, due to prior voluntary reductions or allowance band adjustments, may face small cost increases under the new framework. These costs are minimal and can be flexibly managed by councils under existing legislation, ensuring fairer allowances while maintaining value for communities. This may include voluntarily determining not to implement this increase immediately or otherwise stagger the transition to these allowance rates.

# Setting the foundation for future allowance reviews

Following implementation of these reforms, it will be important that councillor numbers and allowances are subject to regular review into the future, to ensure communities are both adequately represented, and that councillors continue to be fairly and equitably remunerated.

Deficiencies with the current processes for reviewing councillor numbers and allowances – including a lack of clear structure and transparency around the scope, timing and conduct of regular reviews – has led to inconsistent and inequitable outcomes across the sector.

The framework proposed in this paper provides the opportunity to provide increased certainty around future reviews and improved transparency into how they are to occur

The Government is considering legislative changes to establish a mandatory schedule for regular reviews (for example, once every term of council). The technical details of these provisions would need to be further developed, but the Government is keen in the first instance to test with the sector and the community, support for the concept of legislating for routine, regular allowances and number reviews conducted in accordance with the methodology outlined in this paper.

We believe this proposal has merit, as it would see the re-application of the methodology to councils on a regular basis, ensuring council numbers and allowances remain fair and equitable on an absolute and relative basis over time, in response to demographic and other changes.

# Appendix A – Detailed scoring

| **Council** | **Population (2025-26 projections)** | | **Council type - simplified ACLG** | | **Sealed Roads - urban and rural (km)** | | **5 year (19-20 to 23-24) average value of approved DAs $’000** | | **Written down value of infrastructure assets $'000 (2023-24)** | | **Total Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Clarence | 65,014 | 5 | Urban | 1.5 | 465 | 1.5 | $277,518 | 3 | $623,212 | 3 | 14.0 |
| Hobart | 56,967 | 5 | Urban | 1.5 | 299 | 1.5 | $343,265 | 3 | $897,259 | 3 | 14.0 |
| Launceston | 72,701 | 5 | Urban | 1.5 | 543 | 1.5 | $293,907 | 3 | $1,394,520 | 3 | 14.0 |
| Glenorchy | 51,803 | 4 | Urban | 1.5 | 303 | 1.5 | $203,151 | 3 | $633,044 | 3 | 13.0 |
| Kingborough | 42,687 | 4 | Urban | 1.5 | 294 | 1.5 | $169,583 | 3 | $590,758 | 3 | 13.0 |
| Burnie | 20,774 | 2 | Urban | 1.5 | 309 | 1.5 | $76,003 | 2 | $412,045 | 3 | 10.0 |
| Central Coast | 23,490 | 2 | Urban | 1.5 | 560 | 1.5 | $74,595 | 2 | $481,724 | 3 | 10.0 |
| Devonport | 27,108 | 3 | Urban | 1.5 | 250 | 1.5 | $76,643 | 2 | $274,691 | 2 | 10.0 |
| West Tamar | 26,652 | 3 | Urban | 1.5 | 324 | 1.5 | $78,557 | 2 | $295,030 | 2 | 10.0 |
| Northern Midlands | 14,360 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 577 | 1.5 | $107,694 | 3 | $416,334 | 3 | 9.5 |
| Sorell | 18,474 | 2 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 217 | 1.0 | $116,845 | 3 | $305,566 | 2 | 9.0 |
| Circular Head | 8,313 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 303 | 1.5 | $355,170 | 3 | $217,497 | 2 | 8.5 |
| Meander Valley | 21,680 | 2 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 561 | 1.5 | $83,778 | 2 | $231,255 | 2 | 8.5 |
| Huon Valley | 19,991 | 2 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 196 | 1.0 | $72,069 | 2 | $253,887 | 2 | 8.0 |
| Brighton | 20,774 | 2 | Urban | 1.5 | 163 | 1.0 | $90,510 | 2 | $135,646 | 1 | 7.5 |
| Waratah-Wynyard | 14,694 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 295 | 1.5 | $50,232 | 2 | $223,538 | 2 | 7.5 |
| Break O’Day | 7,143 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 230 | 1.0 | $55,821 | 2 | $189,924 | 2 | 7.0 |
| Derwent Valley | 11,467 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 123 | 1.0 | $94,102 | 2 | $153,505 | 2 | 7.0 |
| Latrobe | 13,654 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 242 | 1.0 | $73,029 | 2 | $332,847 | 2 | 7.0 |
| Dorset | 6,933 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 252 | 1.5 | $20,725 | 1 | $187,136 | 2 | 6.5 |
| Kentish | 6,965 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 262 | 1.5 | $27,836 | 1 | $270,974 | 2 | 6.5 |
| Glamorgan-Spring Bay | 5,351 | 1 | Rural Small | 0.5 | 179 | 1.0 | $59,193 | 2 | $120,193 | 1 | 5.5 |
| George Town | 7,306 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 198 | 1.0 | $28,002 | 1 | $144,012 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Southern Midlands | 7,014 | 1 | Rural Large | 1.0 | 217 | 1.0 | $31,358 | 1 | $139,117 | 1 | 5.0 |
| Central Highlands | 2,604 | 1 | Rural Small | 0.5 | 135 | 1.0 | $22,791 | 1 | $92,270 | 1 | 4.5 |
| West Coast | 4,296 | 1 | Rural Small | 0.5 | 124 | 1.0 | $26,910 | 1 | $88,229 | 1 | 4.5 |
| Flinders | 928 | 1 | Rural Small | 0.5 | 97 | 0.5 | $7,640 | 1 | $75,282 | 1 | 4.0 |
| King Island | 1,654 | 1 | Rural Small | 0.5 | 92 | 0.5 | $21,917 | 1 | $77,869 | 1 | 4.0 |
| Tasman | 2,720 | 1 | Rural Small | 0.5 | 80 | 0.5 | $17,564 | 1 | $63,367 | 1 | 4.0 |

# Appendix B – Comparative representation and allowance data

**Figure 1 - Average population per councillor – jurisdictional comparison**

| **Jurisdiction** | **Number of councils** | **Number of councillors[[7]](#footnote-8)** | **Population (ABS 2021)** | **Population per councillor** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NSW | 128 | 1259 | 8,072,163 | 6412 |
| Vic | 79 | 618 | 6,503,491 | 10523 |
| QLD | 77 | 600\* | 5,156,138 | 8594 |
| WA | 139 | 1200\* | 2,660,026 | 2217 |
| SA | 68 | 630 | 1,781,516 | 2828 |
| Tas | 29 | 263 | 557,571 | 2120 |
| NT | 17 | 159 | 232,605 | 1463 |
| **Tas (proposed)** | **29** | **203** | **557,571** | **2694** |

* The proposed changes to numbers would see Tasmania have the third lowest proportion of people per councillor (above Northern Territory and Western Australia). We would have representational parity with South Australia.
* Importantly, this demonstrates there would be no adverse dilution of local representation compared to other jurisdictions.

**Figure 2 – changes to population per councillor (PPC) figures between 2013 – 2027 (factoring in changes to numbers)**

|  | **2013-14 (ABS)** | | **2020-2021 (ABS)** | | **2026-27 (Treasury projections - medium)** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Council** | **Population** | **PPC** | **Population** | **PPC** | **Population** | **PPC (proposed model)** |
| Break O'Day | 6312 | 701 | 6936 | 771 | 7179 | 1026 |
| Brighton | 16221 | 1802 | 19263 | 2140 | 21051 | 3007 |
| Burnie | 19565 | 2174 | 20441 | 2271 | 20500 | 2563 |
| Central Coast | 21989 | 2443 | 23278 | 2586 | 23537 | 2942 |
| Central Highlands | 2239 | 249 | 2580 | 287 | 2610 | 522 |
| Circular Head | 8204 | 912 | 8335 | 926 | 8304 | 1186 |
| Clarence | 54219 | 4518 | 62396 | 5200 | 65521 | 7280 |
| Derwent Valley | 10013 | 1252 | 11114 | 1389 | 11530 | 1647 |
| Devonport | 25295 | 2811 | 26922 | 2991 | 27164 | 3396 |
| Dorset | 6920 | 769 | 6991 | 777 | 6915 | 988 |
| Flinders | 871 | 124 | 938 | 134 | 927 | 185 |
| George Town | 6854 | 762 | 7213 | 801 | 7320 | 1046 |
| Glamorgan-Spring Bay | 4430 | 554 | 5118 | 640 | 5394 | 771 |
| Glenorchy | 46044 | 4604 | 51233 | 5123 | 52024 | 5780 |
| Hobart | 51232 | 4269 | 56084 | 4674 | 57238 | 6360 |
| Huon Valley | 16243 | 1805 | 18809 | 2090 | 20192 | 2885 |
| Kentish | 6317 | 702 | 6778 | 753 | 7008 | 1001 |
| King Island | 1611 | 179 | 1654 | 184 | 1649 | 330 |
| Kingborough | 35723 | 3572 | 40815 | 4082 | 43140 | 4793 |
| Latrobe | 10569 | 1174 | 12705 | 1412 | 13841 | 1977 |
| Launceston | 66576 | 5548 | 71906 | 5992 | 72940 | 8104 |
| Meander Valley | 19519 | 2169 | 21153 | 2350 | 21771 | 3110 |
| Northern Midlands | 12819 | 1424 | 14030 | 1559 | 14422 | 2060 |
| Sorell | 13981 | 1553 | 16975 | 1886 | 18740 | 2677 |
| Southern Midlands | 6139 | 877 | 6838 | 977 | 7049 | 1007 |
| Tasman | 2389 | 341 | 2643 | 378 | 2732 | 546 |
| Waratah-Wynyard | 14014 | 1752 | 14641 | 1830 | 14702 | 2100 |
| West Coast | 4392 | 488 | 4373 | 486 | 4285 | 857 |
| West Tamar | 22921 | 2547 | 25747 | 2861 | 26842 | 3355 |

**Figure 3 – Jurisdictional administrative and democratic comparison of 5-councillor LGAs**

* Victoria is the only Australian Jurisdiction with five-councillor councils (although all others have six-councillor councils).
* These Victorian councils are rural, cover significantly broader areas on average (except Borough of Queenscliffe) and all have higher populations than Tasman, Central Highlands, King Island and Flinders councils.

| **Jurisdiction** | **5-councillor councils** | **Population (ABS 2021)** | **Area size (km2)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Victoria | Mansfield Shire Council | 10,178 | 3843.9 |
| Loddon Shire Council | 7,759 | 6696.4 |
| Pyrenees Shire Council | 7,671 | 3434.6 |
| Towong Shire Council | 6,223 | 6675.2 |
| West Wimmera Shire Council | 4,006 | 9108.7 |
| Borough of Queenscliffe Council | 3,276 | 8.6 |
| Tasmania | West Coast | 4,373 | 9583.5 |
| Tasman Council | 2,643 | 660.4 |
| Central Highlands Council | 2,580 | 7982.4 |
| King Island | 1,654 | 1095.7 |
| Flinders Council | 938 | 1996.6 |

**Figure 4 – Democratic outcomes with current councillor numbers - results of 30 recounts undertaken since 2022 (and first preference votes received by successful candidate in 2022) (DEIDENTIFIED)**

| **First preference votes received in 2022** | **Total formal votes received by council in 2022 election** | **First preference vote % received in 2022** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 608 | 11,867 | 5.12% |
| 44 | 2,012 | 2.19% |
| 209 | 6,414 | 3.26% |
| 208 | 4,590 | 4.53% |
| 56 | 1.22% |
| 93 | 2.03% |
| 105 | 2.29% |
| 157 | 3.42% |
| 17 | 702 | 2.42% |
| 128 | 3,784 | 3.38% |
| 112 | 2.96% |
| 227 | 25,506 | 0.89% |
| 803 | 3.15% |
| 687 | 2.69% |
| 428 | 30,708 | 1.39% |
| 486 | 1.58% |
| 179 | 11,386 | 1.57% |
| 285 | 2.50% |
| 648 | 5.69% |
| 158 | 12,793 | 1.24% |
| 310 | 2.42% |
| 634 | 4.96% |
| 458 | 3.58% |
| 124 | 10,231 | 1.21% |
| 351 | 4,033 | 8.70% |
| 103 | 2,188 | 4.71% |
| 65 | 2.97% |
| 406 | 15,530 | 2.61% |
| 624 | 37,578 | 1.66% |
| 503 | 1.34% |

**Figure 5 – Jurisdictional councillor allowance rates (and categories for determining allowances)**

|  | **Victoria** | **Councillor allowance** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | 1 | 61,153 |
| 2 | 40,769 |
| 3 | 34,028 |
| 4 | 27,291 |

|  | **Queensland** | **Councillor allowance** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | F2 | 166,653 |
| E2 | 153,141 |
| D3 | 135,123 |
| D2 | 117,109 |
| C3 | 100,052 |
| C2 | 99,090 |
| C1 | 78,814 |
| B3 | 77,876 |
| B2 | 77,688 |
| B1 | 60,270 |
| A3 | 60,270 |
| A2 | 59,695 |
| A1 | 59,695 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Western Australia** | **Councillor allowance (maximum payable)** |
| Category | 1 | 34,278 |
| 2 | 25,137 |
| 3 | 17,711 |
| 4 | 10,286 |
| regional councils | 11,430 |

|  | **South Australia** | **Councillor allowance** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | 1A | 25,838 |
| 1B | 22,828 |
| 2 | 19,110 |
| 3 | 15,381 |
| 4 | 10,955 |
| 5 | 7,192 |

|  | **New South Wales** | **Councillor allowance (maximum payable)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Principal CBD | 45,070 |
| Major CBD | 37,960 |
| Metropolitan Major | 35,890 |
| Metropolitan Large | 33,810 |
| Metropolitan Medium | 28,690 |
| Metropolitan Small | 22,540 |
| Major Regional City | 35,620 |
| Major Strategic Area | 35,620 |
| Regional Strategic Area | 33,810 |
| Regional Centre | 27,050 |
| Regional Rural | 22,540 |
| Rural Large | 18,340 |
| Rural | 13,520 |

1. Local Government NSW 2022. Submission to the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal. February 2022. ([www.lgnsw.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Submissions/2022/Submission-to-the-Local-Government-Remuneration-Tribunal\_Feb2022.pdf](http://www.lgnsw.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Submissions/2022/Submission-to-the-Local-Government-Remuneration-Tribunal_Feb2022.pdf)). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See Recommendation 34 of the [Future of Local Government Review Final Report](https://www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The-Future-of-Local-Government-Review-Final-Report.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. QLD and WA figures are approximations from respective electoral commission/OLG websites. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. NSW OLG – comparative council information (<https://olg.nsw.gov.au/public/about-councils/comparative-council-information/your-council-report/>) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Please note that allowances are adjusted by an inflationary factor on 1 November each year, and the calculations in this paper will be subject to that minor adjustment. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Councils highlighted in green move up a band, receiving the 14.25% base councillor increase as well as new allowance band costs for councillors, Mayor and Deputy Mayor allowances. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. QLD and WA figures are approximations from respective electoral commission/OLG websites. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)