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SUBMISSION: MERIT BASED RECRUITEMENT IN COUNCILS

We note the discussion paper regarding merit-based recruitment in Councils and provide this brief submission in response.

Waratah-Wynyard Council have an adopted Recruitment Policy which states “recruitment of Waratah-Wynyard Council employees will be based on merit in fair and open competition without patronage, favouritism or discrimination”. Furthermore, Council has established a Recruitment Procedure to set out the principles of good practice in Recruitment and Selection, and to promote equality of opportunity for all candidates.

We note the proposal to amend the Act to reinstate the appointment and promotion of council employees be according to merit. In line with the point above, this change will have no impact on the practices of Waratah-Wynyard Council.

The discussion paper also references that a legislated requirement will place a clear onus on councils to maintain a high standard of human resources management and that the Director of Local Government, Integrity Commission, and Tasmanian Ombudsman, are empowered to monitor councils’ systemic compliance with legislated requirements, and these reinstated and expanded requirements would be within their remit. It is unlikely any of these bodies will undertake proactive measures to ensure compliance, and are more likely to explore compliance when responding to a complaint or as part of an investigation.

A more appropriate monitoring mechanism may be to alter the *Local Government (Audit Panels) Order 2014* and include a further point within the functions of audit panels to include oversight of an appropriate human resources framework.

A provision is being considered that advertising for a vacant General Manager role is not required where an appointee is a current, and continuing, employee of another council in order to facilitate

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arrangements including the joint or shared appointment of a General Manager. The legislation must be clear that the “current, and continuing, employee of another council” can only be the General Manager as any other officer appointment would not meet the principles of merit in line with broader proposed legislative changes. This type of clause must be complemented with immediate changes to the Local Government Act, highlighted during the stalled review process, that legislation concerning delegations need to be improved to allow resource shared employees to undertake their roles efficiently.

Broadly, changes to legislation requiring that vacancies in the position of General Manager be advertised, that appointments be according to merit and the development of performance assessment principles are considered changes in line with contemporary human resource management. Waratah-Wynyard has used a consultant to employ its last two General Managers.

Finally, the above points and proposed changes need to be considered in light of the challenging resourcing environment faced by Councils at the moment. Recruitment, and retention, is becoming increasingly difficult, and it is important any legislative changes do not create barriers or unnecessary imposts on councils that further act as a deterrent to attracting employees.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any further information.

Yours sincerely



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