

**PREMIER'S
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COUNCIL**

Wednesday 15 December 2021, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm
Premier's Reception Room, Level 11, Executive Building 15 Murray St Hobart

Meeting Minutes

PLGC Members		
	Hon Peter Gutwein MP	Premier (Chair)
	Hon Roger Jaensch MP	Minister for Local Government and Planning
	Cr Christina Holmdahl	President, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) General Management Committee (GMC), Mayor, West Tamar Council
	Cr Anna Reynolds	Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council
	Cr Mick Tucker	Vice President, LGAT GMC Mayor, Break O'Day Council
	Cr Annette Rockliff	Mayor, Devonport City Council
	Cr Peter Freshney	Mayor, Latrobe Council
	Cr Alex Green	Mayor, Southern Midlands Council
	Cr Danny Gibson	Deputy Mayor, Launceston City Council
	Ald Bec Thomas	Mayor (Deputy Mayor), Glenorchy City Council
PLGC Officials		
	Ian Nelson	General Manager, Clarence City Council
	Sandra Ayton	General Manager, Central Coast Council
	Des Jennings	General Manager, Northern Midlands Council
	Dion Lester	Chief Executive Officer, LGAT
	Ben Morris	Policy Director, LGAT
	Craig Limkin	Deputy Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)
	Mathew Healey	Executive Director, Office of Local Government (OLG), DPAC/Director of Local Government
	Michael Mogridge	Assistant Director of Policy and Sector Performance (Local Government), OLG, DPAC
Secretariat		
	Giselle Vincent	Policy and Project Officer, OLG, DPAC

Ministerial support		
	Rick Dunn	Senior Advisor to Premier Gutwein
	David Palmer	Adviser to Minister Jaensch
	Dr Anthony Reid	Chief of Staff to Minister Jaensch

Welcome

The Premier welcomed participants to the second and final Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) meeting of 2021 and thanked those who had travelled to Hobart to attend the meeting.

The Premier opened the meeting with a discussion on the re-opening of Tasmania's borders. The Premier acknowledged the significant role that local government has played in keeping the community safe and invited the sector to reach out to him at any time with concerns they may have within their communities.

No guests were in attendance.

Agenda Item 1: PLGC minutes from 22 July 2021

The PLGC resolved to accept the draft minutes as a true and accurate record of that meeting, noting that two actions were on-going.

Agenda Item 2: Minister's Update – Statutory and Divisional Arrangements

The Minister for Local Government and Planning opened this item by advising PLGC that on 13 December 2021, Her Excellency the Governor appointed Mr Mathew Healey to the statutory role of Director of Local Government. The Minister further advised that Mr Healey would hold that statutory role in conjunction with his position as Executive Director Local Government.

The Minister stated that the former Local Government Division at DPAC would henceforth be known as the Office of Local Government, managed by Mr Healey.

The Minister extended his thanks to Mr Craig Limkin for his significant work in managing the responsibilities of the statutory role as Director of Local Government in conjunction with his roles as Deputy Secretary Policy and Intergovernmental, DPAC and State Recovery Advisor.

The Minister also thanked Mr Michael Mogridge and staff in the Office of Local Government for their efficient management of the leadership changes.

The Premier also offered his thanks to Mr Limkin.

The PLGC discussed the COVID-19 pandemic. The Premier agreed to request that Public Health officials further consider regional arrangements for vaccination delivery but also stated that it would be necessary for General Practitioners and pharmacists across Tasmania to play a role in this space.

Agenda Item 3: Strategic Priorities

Agenda Item 3.1: Future of Local Government in Tasmania Review

The Minister extended his thanks to LGAT and the sector for their willingness to engage in the Future of Local Government Review (the Review) process, and for the valuable feedback and assistance that has been given to discussions to date.

The Minister noted that the 2-page document on the proposed review process, as previously presented at the LGAT Special General Meeting on 4 Nov 2021, should be referred to as the source document for the Review.

Copies of the Review Terms of Reference (ToR) were distributed to attendees. The Minister advised that the ToR had been created in consultation with LGAT.

The Minister thanked the sector for their valuable input, advice and positive approach to the Review.

Copies of the Local Government Board appointee profiles were distributed to attendees.

The Minister noted that Sue Smith was the appointed Chairperson, with the following additional members:

- Paul West
- Pam Allen
- Kym Goodes
- Ric De Santi
- Mathew Healey (as Director of Local Government)

The Minister confirmed that there would be available reporting on milestones and how the Review is tracking. The Minister also confirmed that the intention was to release the information at the conclusion of the PLGC meeting and that they would be available on the OLG/DPAC website.

Agenda Item 3.2: Code of Conduct Framework Review

Copies of the Tasmanian Government response to public consultation on the Code of Conduct Framework Review were distributed to attendees.

Minister Jaensch outlined the six key proposed reforms to the Code of Conduct Framework as discussed in the Government response paper.

1. Improving consistency and clarity across councils;
2. Using dispute resolution for less serious issues;
3. Focusing initial assessment on more serious allegations;
4. Increasing confidence in assessments and investigations;
5. Stronger monitoring of compliance with sanctions; and
6. Positioning the framework for the future.

The Minister stated that investigations into the feasibility of transference of Code of Conduct to the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT) will be undertaken whilst the other reforms are being implemented.

The Minister asked Mr Michael Mogridge to speak to the response paper.

Mr Mogridge confirmed that amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993* would be required, for instance to make provision for councils to require a dispute resolution policy. The Minister noted that the drafting of these amendments would be done in consultation with LGAT and would occur within the first half of 2022.

Minister Jaensch discussed that the intention was to publicly release the government response paper on the 16 December 2021 and that the next stages would be undertaken in the first half of 2022. The Minister also clarified that Ms Sue Smith would step down from the Code of Conduct Panel in order to take up her new role on the Local Government Board.

Agenda Item 3.3: Closing the Gap in Local Government

The Premier explained that the National Agreement on Closing the Gap was developed through partnership between all spheres of government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Premier also noted that he was particularly keen to take further steps on reconciliation through collaboration with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Corporation and other similar organisations and groups and he is currently waiting on feedback from across the state on next steps.

Minister Jaensch stated that the Tasmanian Government and local government are signatories to Closing the Gap and that as part of the implementation, it is important to gain an understanding of the nature of the varied relationships councils hold with Aboriginal groups and corporations around the state.

The Minister explained that the Local Government Aboriginal Audit should really be thought of as a survey and that the commitment to Closing the Gap cap now be considered as activated. He noted that it is an important first step to understanding the current situation in each municipality.

The Premier made note of the sensitive nature of issues around acknowledgement of the upcoming Australia Day and noted that some areas had already made decisions about whether celebrations would go ahead as many people within our communities are reluctant or unwilling to acknowledge the day and associated awards.

Agenda Item 4: Strategic Work Program

The Premier reiterated the value of the PLGC as a forum for joint discussion of shared strategic issues and noted the priority items that would need to be considered and discussed in 2022 such as:

- o the conduct of the 2022 local government elections;
- o ongoing planning reforms;

- o the implementation of targeted legislative changes to the *Local Government Act 1993* in relation to the Code of Conduct and Independent Living Units;
- o joint efforts to deliver a workplace safety review; and
- o delivery of Closing the Gap priority actions.

Agenda Item 5: Other Business and Meeting Close

Ms Ayton requested that a briefing be provided to the sector on mental health issues arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Ayton clarified that it was important to keep abreast of these issues in order to support the health of staff and volunteers across councils.

The Premier agreed that these were extremely important issues with a huge impact on the whole community and that staff and volunteers may suffer from burn-out due to long hours and a large emotional toll.

Mr Limkin advised that the Regional Recovery Committees are focussing on these issues and that a new National Mental Health Agreement has been endorsed by National Cabinet.

Mayor Holmdahl acknowledged the great work done by the Tasmanian Government on COVID-19 and extended her thanks on behalf of the sector for keeping the Tasmanian community safe.

The Minister extended his thanks to the sector for the patience and trust that the sector had placed in him as the incoming Minister for Local Government and Planning. Minister Jaensch noted this gave him a great deal of confidence going forward in the role.

Meeting closed 3:22 pm

Actions

Agenda Item	Actions From PLGC Meeting on 15 December 2021	Who	When	Complete
2	Investigate vaccination options and regulations to facilitate more efficient vaccine delivery in regional areas	Public Health	ASAP	Public Health is preparing an update on this matter.
Agenda Item	Actions From PLGC Meeting on 22 July 2021	Who	When	Complete
2	Keep the sector informed regarding any Government deliberations about the proposed re-scheduling of local government elections.	Minister/s Office, Local Government Division	As appropriate	Complete. Will not be rescheduled

3	Consider the merits of TASCAT taking carriage of the Code of Conduct Framework.	Minister/s Office, Local Government Division	ASAP	In progress as part of the CoC review process
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