

**PREMIER'S
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COUNCIL**

Wednesday 30 November 2022, 2:00-4:00pm
Cabinet Room and online, Level 11, Executive Building 15 Murray St Hobart

Meeting Minutes

PLGC Members		
Apology	The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP	Premier
	The Hon Nic Street MP	Minister for Local Government (Chair)
	Cr Christina Holmdahl	President, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) General Management Committee (GMC), Mayor, West Tamar Council
	Cr Mick Tucker	Vice President, LGAT GMC Mayor, Break O'Day Council
	Cr Anna Reynolds	Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council
	Cr Danny Gibson	Mayor, Launceston City Council
	Cr Peter Freshney	Mayor, Latrobe Council
	Ald Bec Thomas	Mayor, Glenorchy City Council
	Cr Kelly Spaulding	Mayor, Tasman Council
PLGC Officials		
Apology	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
Apology	Craig Limkin	Deputy Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)
	Mat Healey	Executive Director, Local Government, DPAC
	Mel Brown	Assistant Director, Office of Local Government
Secretariat		

	Dianna Christine	Principal Policy and Project Officer, Office of Local Government, DPAC
	James Francis-Smith	Policy and Project Officer, Office of Local Government, DPAC
Ministerial support		
	Vince Taskunas	Chief of Staff to Minister Street
	Melissa Geard	Adviser to Minister Street

Welcome

The Minister welcomed participants to the final Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) of 2022 and acknowledged the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of country.

The Minister thanked the members for their work over the last year. Apologies from the Premier, Ian Nelson, and Craig Limkin were noted.

The Minister noted the recent success of compulsory voting – highlighting the return rate of 84.79 per cent. It was an encouraging result after significant work and effort to ensure that local government received the appropriate level of engagement at the election.

The Minister congratulated and welcomed returned and new members and thanked them for their presence at the meeting.

Agenda Item 1: PLGC minutes from 8 August 2022

Mayor Holmdahl expressed disappointment in the intention to not proceed with independent living unit (ILUs) rating reform at this time and noted this was a subject of concern in the local government sector and may be perceived as inequitable by the community.

The Minister reiterated that the State position was not to proceed with legislative change, though he emphasised that the State Government wished to work with local government and charitable institutions on an equitable future approach. The Minister acknowledged the sector's dissatisfaction with this decision.

Mayor Freshney noted that a commitment on ILUs was previously given in writing by the former Premier.

Minutes of the previous PLGC meeting from 8 August 2022 were accepted.

Agenda Item 2: Minister's Update

Minister Street noted the recent results of the local government elections and outlined that the Office of Local Government would seek feedback from with the public, to supplement the ordinary report on elections published by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC).

The Minister expressed his disappointment in relation to the behaviours and conduct of some candidates through the campaign. The Minister noted the apparent disparity between State and local candidates. Members shared his disappointment in candidates and hoped that further reforms would improve conduct at future elections.

Members reflected on the election and identified issues related to the TEC's challenges in delivering compulsory voting for the first time. Mayor Holmdahl and Ms Ayton noted that their councils had queues of electors out of the doors seeking postal ballot packs. Both related that many people were not aware that voting was compulsory.

Members congratulated the Tasmanian community for its participation in the local government elections and were pleased with the very high return rate.

Members also noted identified issues which will need addressing in the future – absentee voting, assisted voting, involvement of councils in the voting process, voting processes (1-5 voting) which allow for broader voter participation in electing an entire council, and whether there would be consideration for postal or single day polling.

Members discussed councillor behaviour in the context of the TEC, noting that advice to candidates was unclear regarding the TEC's remit to police behaviours. This caused confusion and an excessive approach from some candidates.

The Minister acknowledged the discussion and the points raised and cited that 2023 will bring a more comprehensive opportunity for review and revision of the legislative framework for local government elections.

Members acknowledged and appreciated the caretaker provisions for the election.

Members discussed whether leadership roles in council (mayor/deputy mayor) should again require prior local government experience.

Agenda Item 4: Learning and Development Framework

The Director of Local Government noted that previous processes around learning and development in local government had been informal and haphazard. The Director acknowledged the need for a robust, well-funded and well-implemented Learning and Development Framework for delivering good governance in local government.

The Director delivered a presentation to members noting the initial work by the Office of Local Government concerning a capability framework. This presentation outlined that systems in other jurisdictions draw multiple streams of learning and development into cohesive capability frameworks.

The Minister and members discussed the need for councillors to participate in learning and development positively and proactively. The Minister noted the need for a 'carrot and stick' approach.

It was noted by members that linking Council budgets directly to a proposed 'framework' would align councils' interest to the framework while providing a direct uplift in skills and investment. Mayor Thomas pointed out current issues in linking current councillor learning and development with their individual expenses, which has led to accountability concerns among members of the community.

The Director emphasised that the framework is not going to be optional and would require, full commitment of councils and the State.

Mayor Thomas proposed altering the Terms of Reference to link the objectives directly with 'learning' and 'development'.

Members agreed to the proposed amendment and the recommendation for the establishment of a Governance Group with the membership as proposed.

Agenda Item 5: Managing Interests Framework

The Minister noted the need for improvements in the management of interests. The Office of Local Government, with LGAT, will work in consultation with councils on this work. The Lord Mayor enquired as to what timeframe this work would progress, noting that Hobart City Council intends to implement a register of interests for councillors.

The Minister emphasised that while cooperative solutions were preferred, this issue was one where mandatory requirements would be necessary.

Members discussed the broad implications of an interests framework, citing the example of Queensland, and explored current timeframes for this work. It was noted that the Auditor-General has previously made pertinent observations.

Members agreed that the Office of Local Government work with LGAT through a Working Group to commence this work.

Agenda Item 6.1: 2022 Local Government Elections

The Minister noted the outcome of the 2022 local government elections and the consultative process to commence through the Office of Local Government. The Minister briefly outlined the scope and purpose of the consultation process with members. The Minister noted that public consultation would commence next week and continue to the last week of January.

Members noted the 2022 Local Government Elections Paper.

Agenda Item 6.2: State Planning Office Work Program

The Minister acknowledged the latest work program for the State Planning Office.

Mr Dion Lester stated that feedback from the local government sector indicated that the State Planning Office was not meeting expectations around timely delivery for current reforms and its work underway. Mr Lester encouraged the State Planning Office to reconsider its approach to consultation, citing inefficient and slow progress.

Members noted the State Planning Office Work Program Paper.

Agenda Item 6.3: Getting Tasmania Ready for Growth

Ms Ayton noted Central Coast Council's concerns regarding delays in reviewing its Regional Land Use Strategies and were not in keeping with the Regional Plans. Ms Ayton noted delays had become a source of stress for Council and developers. It was understood that due to the State Planning Office's ongoing work program, there would be future impacts to the Regional Land Use Strategies. It was noted that amending the Strategies now would result in duplicative efforts.

Minister Street enquired as to the sector's engagement with the Minister for Planning. Mr Lester noted that the issue was not just a planning one. Mayor Tucker cited that outdated Regional Land

Use Strategies were a source of further complication owing to other elements being reviewed and developed by the State Planning Office. Mayor Freshney emphasised that many councils need to update their own Strategies, as in many instances these are years out-of-date.

The Lord Mayor suggested that the State Government needs to have a dedicated Planning and Development Office, with increased resources allocated to the State Planning Office. The Lord Mayor asserted that interim reviews are problematic as these often cannot adequately address systemic issues.

Mr Lester stated that interim reviews are dependent on the State Planning Office and noted that this approach to review has problems. He suggested a need to assess about the tools currently available and determine a strategic approach, while working with local government as it experiences the challenges of growth first-hand.

Members discussed land availability, workforce provision, and the need for an infrastructure contributions framework.

The Minister noted the prospective of whole-of-government effort on these and related issues.

Members noted the Getting Tasmania Ready for Growth Paper.

Agenda Item 6.4: Child Safe Standards and Local Government

The Minister noted the release of the Child and Youth Safe Standards and their introduction to Parliament through the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Bill 2022. The Director noted the imperative that the work to implement the Standards for local government, progresses promptly. It was noted that the Office of Local Government, the Department of Justice and LGAT are working towards an engagement process to assist councils to understand their obligations. The Director emphasised that this work will be a collaborative effort between the State and local government.

The Lord Mayor enquired whether there was any ability or scope to share a child safety officer amongst multiple councils. The Director noted the NSW approach, which aims to ensure that a child safety officer was embedded within each organisation and to develop capability to fulfil that responsibility to keep children safe.

The Minister noted that significant effort is required to ensure that organisations have the broad knowledge to carry on this work. He reiterated to members their shared responsibility to ensure that these responsibilities are properly met.

The Director emphasised that the lens to be applied is to keep children safe.

Members noted the Paper.

Agenda Item 7: Other business and Close

Members returned to the discussion on behaviour and conduct. Members noted and thanked the Director, Mathew Healey, for his support during, and before, the election. Members noted again that negative conduct throughout the election campaign placed considerable strain on council staff, and in particular, general managers.

The Minister noted that the Director and the Office of Local Government will be more proactive in dealing with and mitigating adverse councillor conduct. This will be achieved through an

emphasis on early intervention, to attempt to avert smaller issues escalating into larger ones. Behaviour in the elections was discussed further through the context of the Learning and Development Framework.

The Director noted and members discussed the importance of working with members of the community responsible for harassment and disruptive behaviour. Mayor Holmdahl emphasised the importance of powers to prevent these difficult members. In managing difficult members of the public, the Lord Mayor observed the importance of access to mediators and a behavioural framework. The Director noted that complementary work was underway to help resolve various conduct issues.

The Minister thanked those present for their contributions over the past year and wished them well into the Christmas break and New Year.

Meeting closed 3:59 PM

Actions

Agenda Item	Actions From PLGC Meeting 30 Nov 2022	Who	When	Status
4.0	Office of Local Government to work with LGAT on the establishment of a Governance Group to progress the Learning and Development Framework	OLG and LGAT	ASAP	Ongoing
5.0	Office of Local Government to with LGAT on creating a Working Group to progress the Managing Interests Framework	OLG and LGAT	ASAP	Ongoing
Agenda Item	Actions From PLGC Meeting 8 Aug 2022	Who	When	Status
3.1	Office of Local Government to work with LGAT to develop an agreed approach to consultation with Local Government by State Agencies during caretaker periods	OLG and LGAT	ASAP	Complete