

# PREMIER'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

9:00 - 10.30 am Thursday 27 July 2023

Cabinet Room and online, Level 11, Executive Building 15 Murray St Hobart

PLGC Members	
The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP	Premier (Chair)
The Hon Nic Street MP	Minister for Local Government
Cr Mick Tucker	President, Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) General Management Committee (GMC) Mayor, Break O'Day Council
Cr Paula Wriedt	Vice President, LGAT GMC Mayor, Kingborough Council
Cr Mary Duniam	Mayor, Waratah-Wynyard
Cr Leigh Gray	Mayor, Brighton
Cr Mary Knowles	Mayor, Northern Midlands
Danny Gibson	Launceston City Council
PLGC Officials	
Dion Lester	Chief Executive Officer, LGAT
Ben Morris	Policy Director, LGAT
Matthew Atkins	General Manager - Devonport City Council
Mathew Healey	Executive Director, Office of Local Government (OLG)
Secretariat	
Jaime Bridle	Assistant Director, OLG
Dan Hall	Senior Policy and Project Officer, OLG,
Jess Baker	Policy Officer, OLG
Ministerial Support	
Melissa Geard	Adviser to Minister Street
Tim Lovibond	A/g Chief of Staff to Minister Street
Rick Dunn	Senior Adviser to the Premier

<b>Apologies</b>	
Cr Anna Reynolds	Lord Mayor, Hobart City Council
Cr Cheryl Fuller	Mayor, Central Coast
Ian Nelson	General Manager, Clarence City Council
Des Jennings	General Manager, Northern Midlands Council

## Welcome

The Premier welcomed members to the first Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC) for 2023 and acknowledged and paid respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land.

The Premier thanked the members for all their hard work and leadership over the past year and welcomed new PLGC members, Paula, Cheryl, Leigh, Mary Duniam and Mary Knowles and Congratulated Mick Tucker to the role of President of Local Government Association.

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

The Premier acknowledged previous PLGC members services and leadership, with circumstances meaning they were unfortunately unable to have a final meeting with previous PLGC members. The Premier also acknowledging the service of Mayor Christina Holmdahl, the former President of LGAT and Chair of the GMC.

Apologies from PLGC members Anna Reynolds and Cheryl Fuller, and Officials Des Jennings, and Ian Nelson were noted.

## Agenda Item 1: Minutes – PLGC meeting 30 November 2022

The minutes from PLGC meeting 30 November 2022 were accepted unchanged.

Two new actions were recorded at the meeting on 30 November 2022, including the establishment of a Working Group to progress agenda item 3.1 Managing Interest Framework, and the creation of a Governance Group for agenda item 3.3 Local Government Learning and Development Framework. Both groups have been created and are progressing.

## Agenda Item 2: Minister's Update

The Minister for Local Government welcomed members and provided an overview of the agenda items to improve governance and conduct in councils.

The Minister provided an update on the Future of Local Government Review and the Government's decision to rule out forced council amalgamations. The Board will produce a final report containing recommendations. The Minister emphasised that the Government is committed to reform and is also committed to listening to the community and only progressing changes that communities understand and support.

The Minister acknowledged the announcement of a board of inquiry into Dorset City Council. He emphasised that to date only allegations had been raised, however they are of a serious nature and warrant further investigation. He noted that a Board of Inquiry will establish a fair procedure and provide an opportunity for the community and all council members involved to express their concerns and respond to the allegations through a formal process.

The Minister welcomed the new President of the Local Government Association of Tasmania, Mayor Mick Tucker, and paid tribute to his predecessor Mayor Christina Holmdahl. Mayor Tucker expressed his disappointment at the Government's lack of collaboration and consultation with the sector concerning the Government's decisions related to both compulsory council mergers and the proposed changes to the planning scheme that would remove councils from making some decisions.

Mayor Tucker expressed concern regarding the State's planning processes, especially the Land Use Management Scheme, and a perceived lack of resourcing for Departments that are involved with progressing development applications on Crown Land.

The Premier acknowledged his respect for Mayor Tucker's perspective and the sector's dissatisfaction with the decision on planning reform and reiterated the Government's desire to work collaboratively with the sector.

### **Agenda Item 3. Strategy to improve governance and conduct in local government**

The Premier emphasised that the focus of today's meeting is a range of strategies and programs presently under development, with the goal of improving governance and conduct in Tasmanian councils.

PLGC **endorsed** the Office of Local Government's approach to ensuring that the behaviour of both staff and elected officials adheres to the highest standards.

#### **Agenda Item 3.1: Managing Interest Framework – progress report**

The Director of Local Government introduced the proposed draft Managing Interest Framework and highlighted the need for consistency and improvements.

The Minister expressed appreciation for the proposal and underscored the importance of council members declaring and managing conflicts of interest to maintain public confidence in local government. Members engaged in discussions regarding the components and broad implications of the proposed framework. They deliberated on the proposal to extend the management of councillor's interests beyond council meetings, encompassing workshops and other council forums. Additionally, there was consideration of the intricacies involved in declaring and publishing councillor's personal interests, as well as the role of General Managers in this process. The Minister emphasised that councillors with a conflict of interest should not have access to council information related to that interest.

PLGC **endorsed** the outline of the draft framework for distribution and subsequent consultation.

### **Agenda Item 3.2: Best Practice recruitment and performance management of general managers**

The Premier introduced the proposed best practice recruitment and performance management guide and the introduction of legislative to establish merit-based recruitment processes and principals.

Members discussed the success of the workshop involving mayors, and Local Government New South Wales held on 6 July 2023. The draft framework and best practice guide were informed by the recommendations from this workshop.

The conversation among members also encompassed the inclusion of factors such as operational and cultural compatibility in merit-based recruitment processes, all aimed at promoting good governance. The goal is to ensure that decisions and processes are consistent, and ultimately, are in the best interest of the community.

PLGC **noted** the work to date and **endorsed** plans to seek sector feedback on the draft framework in September 2023.

**Action:** It is intended that OLG will present a final best practice recruitment guide and performance management framework to PLGC for endorsement in December 2023.

### **Agenda Item 3.3: Local Government Learning and Development Framework**

The Premier outlined the Learning and Development Framework, highlighting the need to support the framework's sustainability.

Mat thanked the governance group for all their hard work to date, hoping to build on and develop a robust learning and development framework for the sector. Mat advised resourcing and financial investment will be required from the sector to implement the Framework. Mat invited discussion on financial and operational sustainability options from the group.

Members acknowledged all the skills required of a councillor that do not come naturally and the importance to build on these skills and to push for training to be mandatory. The need to build confidence in the framework and to increase uptake was highlighted by members before the sector is called on to provide financial investment.

PLGC **noted** the establishment of the Governance Group and the progress made to date.

### **Agenda Item 3.4: Local Government Amendment (Code of Conduct) Bill 2022**

The Premier introduced the Local Government Amendment (Code of Conduct) Bill (the Bill), and invited members to note the progress and invited discussion.

The Minister noted the Bill currently before Parliament is to improve the code of conduct based on several reforms including: a single model code of conduct; adoption of a dispute resolution policy; initial assessment on more serious complaints to increase confidence in

assessments and investigations; and to provide stronger monitoring of compliance with sanctions.

Members discussed the importance of the relationship between the General Managers, Mayors and Councillors, given there is very little protection and tools to adequately deal with bad behaviour. Members provided examples of councils losing staff and General Managers due to bad behaviour.

PLGC **noted** the progress of the ongoing work and **agreed** to create a Governance Group to guide the implementation of these governance initiatives, and to identify any further reforms that would support improved governance and enhanced workplace safety in local government.

**Action arising:** OLG to prepare a proposal in consultation with LGAT regarding the establishment of a governance group to guide the implementation of governance initiatives and the identification of further reform.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Review of Electoral Arrangements**

The Premier introduced the Review of Electoral Arrangements and acknowledged the launch of compulsory voting at local government elections for the first time in 2022. This resulted in an historic state-wide turnout of 85 per cent, however a range of challenges and directions for improvement were identified to sustain future local government elections.

Members discussed enhancements to absentee and assisted voting services; the introduction of a hybrid voting systems such as a single polling day in conjunction with postal voting to assist timeframes and ballot paper issues. More clarity to align eligibility to state and federal requirements, e.g., citizenship, criminal offences and accessibility was raised, and the increase of social media concerns and misinformation regarding candidates and defamatory information was discussed. It was also noted that compulsory voting has imposed significant extra cost on councils due to the increased turnout and associated resourcing requirements.

PLGC **endorsed** the development of the new Local Elections Legislative Framework to be introduced to Parliament in 2024.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Strategic Regional Partnerships**

The Premier introduced the Strategic Regional Partnerships initiative, committing \$3.57 million across two years to support the establishment of a project team to develop and implement the Partnerships. The first partnership will be developed in the West Coast region by the end of 2023. The Premier emphasised the partnerships will focus on and improve accommodation, housing, and economic diversification within the area.

The Minister noted Partnerships would provide an opportunity to underpin discussion with neighbouring councils across boundaries, which would be worked through post the release of the Future of Local Government Review Report due for release by 31 October 2023.

Dion expressed uncertainty of LGAT's ongoing role in the context of a lack of clarity regarding how the strategic regional partnerships concept would work.

PLGC **noted** the updates regarding strategic regional partnership.

## **Agenda Item 6: Other Business and Meeting Close**

The Premier thanked those present for their contributions, acknowledging all the hard work around the table, and is looking forward to the next PLGC meeting.

**Meeting closed at 10:23 am**

## **Actions arising**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Actions arising from PLGC 27 July 2023</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Status</b>
3.2	OLG to present the Final Framework regarding Best Practice Recruitment and Performance Management of General Managers for endorsement at the December 2023 PLGC.	OLG	Dec 2023 PLGC Meeting	Refer to update paper under agenda item 4. Draft guide out for consultation until 18 December.
3.4	OLG to prepare a proposal in consultation with LGAT regarding the establishment of a governance group to guide the implementation of governance initiatives and the identification of further reforms going forward.	OLG	2023-24	Refer update paper under agenda item 4.