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Local Government Reform
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

The Future of Local Government Review

Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA Australia) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the future of local government in Tasmania.

As the peak association for the fire protection sector, we are keen to ensure that communities are kept safe from the risk of fire, and councils play an increasingly important role in this.

The ongoing professionalism of the fire protection sector needs a strong enforcement regime in place to ensure that practitioners are held accountable for the work they do, and that building owners and managers fulfil their own statutory responsibilities.

In Tasmania, some of this falls upon local councils, which are often under resourced and insufficiently staffed with appropriately qualified individuals to provide effective oversight, particularly when it comes to fire system maintenance.

We therefore welcome proposed moves by the Local Government Board to encourage voluntary amalgamations and to require the use of shared services and technical staff, which will help to reduce current resourcing pressures.

Reporting on maintenance

The decision by the Tasmanian Government to remove reporting requirements for maintenance has placed the population at risk and allowed some building owners and managers to ignore this essential work.

This important responsibility needs to be reinstated.

Whereas a leaking tap, blinking light, or faulty HVAC system will make their presence known, fire protection tends to be unnoticed, and expenditure on servicing and assessment is often the first to be sacrificed.

This means that important testing to ensure that systems are capable of performing, such as 5-yearly pressure tests on hydrants, often gets deferred or cancelled altogether.

The result is a lack of confidence that systems will perform when needed, and a not insignificant chance that it could fail outright.

This places occupants, and fire fighters, at considerable risk and can mean the difference between a building being saved or completely lost.

FPA Australia calls on the Tasmanian Government to reconsider the unwise policy that classifies fire protection maintenance as 'red tape' and to reinstate reporting requirements.

We welcome the proposal to investigate amalgamation and resource sharing in councils so that there is, once again, a properly supported cop on the beat to keep the public safe from the risk of fire.

Yours sincerely,

John Collie
Chief Executive Officer