

George Town Council submission to the Future of Local Government Final Report

	Recommendation	LGAT Position	GTC Position
1	<p>Define in Tasmania's new Local Government Act the role of local government consistent with the statement below:</p> <p>The role of local government is to support and improve the wellbeing of Tasmanian communities by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. harnessing and building on the unique strengths and capabilities of local communities;</li> <li>2. providing infrastructure and services that, to be effective, require local approaches;</li> <li>3. representing and advocating for the specific needs and interests of local communities in regional, state-wide, and national decision-making; and</li> <li>4. promoting the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of local communities, by mitigating and planning for climate change impacts.</li> </ol>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The first three components are consistent with what was proposed in the Stage 1 Interim Report. The fourth has been added as a result of the consultation.</p> <p>This role better reflects councils' broader policy functions than what is currently captured in the LG Act</p>	Supported

2	<p>The Tasmanian Government – through subordinate legislation – should implement a Local Government Charter to support the new legislated role for local government.</p> <p>The Charter should be developed in close consultation with the sector and clarify and consolidate in a single document councils’ core functions, principles, and responsibilities, as well as the obligations of the Tasmanian Government when dealing with the sector as a partner in delivering community services and support.</p>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>This was broadly supported by the sector in previous consultation.</p> <p>However, the devil will be in the detail and how the charter responsibilities are codified in the new Local Government Act.</p> <p>It is proposed that LGATs submission request that a key part of the Charter defines the relationship between local and State Government to enable a more effective interface with, and understanding between, the State Government and local government.</p> <p>The Local Government Charter offers an opportunity to define local and State Government’s shared responsibilities for public service outcomes, principles for engagement, and the obligations of each when delivering community services and legislative responsibilities.</p>	<p>Supported – Introduction of a Charter provides greater flexibility for change not requiring legislative change when/if needed.</p> <p>Clarity on Council’s role in community health and wellbeing required.</p> <p>Other legislation needs to be revisited such as Health Act, Building Act and LUPAA to enable para professionals to undertake certain functions and relive pressure on sector with regard to workforce shortage in technical roles.</p>
3	<p>The Tasmanian Government should work with the sector to develop, resource, and</p>	<p>Supported.</p>	<p>Supported, provided support from State is sufficient to support sector implementation.</p>

	<p>implement a renewed Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework that is embedded in a new Local Government Act to support and underpin the role of local government. Under this Framework councils will be required to develop – within the first year of every council election – a four-year strategic plan.</p> <p>The plan would consist of component plans including, at minimum, a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community engagement plan;</li> <li>• workforce development plan;</li> <li>• elected member capability and professional development plan; and</li> <li>• financial and asset sustainability plan.</li> </ul>	<p>It was inevitable the review would recommend a new strategic planning framework.</p> <p>The Review of the Local Government Act had already recommended that councils develop community engagement plans after each council election.</p> <p>It is not surprising that workforce and councillor capability are two of the headline planning documents, as both areas (within and outside the sector) have been consistently raised throughout the review process.</p> <p>Subject to recommendations 30 and 31, the financial and asset sustainability plans could just involve a four-year horizon on most council's long term plans which they already maintain.</p>	<p>Victorian H&amp;W strategy and engagement plans provide good examples.</p> <p>Workforce development plan (NSW model).</p> <p>What is unique to Tas that provides a competitive advantage that is not financial?</p> <p>Support learning and development framework for elected members.</p> <p>Financial and asset sustainability strategy should be ten year horizon with financial and asset sustainability plans being four years.</p>
4	<p>Formal council amalgamation proposals should be developed for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Coast, Waratah-Wynyard and Circular Head Councils (into 2 councils);</li> <li>• Kentish and Latrobe Councils;</li> </ul>	<p>No LGAT comment.</p> <p>This recommendation is a matter for the councils involved.</p>	<p>No position from GTC</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break O'Day, Glamorgan-Spring Bay and Sorell Councils (into 2 councils);</li> <li>• City of Hobart and Glenorchy City Councils;</li> <li>• Kingborough and Huon Valley Councils.</li> </ul> <p>The Board acknowledges council interest in and discussions on boundary changes are less advanced in respect of City of Hobart and Glenorchy, and Kingborough and Huon Valley councils, but nonetheless believes that these councils have expressed clear interest in further exploring opportunities. The Board believes there is substantial merit in ensuring that those councils (and their communities) are afforded the opportunity to genuinely explore structural consolidation proposals in greater detail.</p>		
5	<p>A new Local Government Board should be established to undertake detailed assessment of formal council amalgamation proposals and make recommendations to the</p>	<p>No LGAT comment.</p> <p>This recommendation is a matter for the councils involved.</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>Critical to get terms of reference and membership right. Consultation with sector should occur in the design of ToR.</p>

	Tasmanian Government on specific new council structures.	Although we would note that membership of this Board and resourcing within the OLG to support it will be critical to the success of the next stages.	
6	A Community Working Group (CWG) should be established in each area where formal amalgamation proposals are being prepared. The CWG would identify specific opportunities the Tasmanian Government could support to improve community outcomes.	<p>No LGAT comment.</p> <p>This recommendation is a matter for the councils involved.</p> <p>Although we would note that the terms of reference of the CWGs is critical.</p>	Supported. Critical to get terms of reference and membership right. Consultation with sector should occur in the design of ToR.
7	In those areas where amalgamation proposals are being developed, a community vote should be held before any reform proceeds, to consider an integrated package of reform that involves both a formal council amalgamation proposal and a funded package of opportunities to improve community outcomes.	<p>No LGAT comment. This recommendation is a matter for the councils involved.</p> <p>This was a commitment by the Minister and Premier when ruling out forced amalgamations earlier this year. There are mixed views across councils on the benefits of this requirement. In addition to the community vote it is important that the State Government support the councils involved to run a community education campaign to inform the community of the proposals, rather than just leave it up to grassroots campaigning (for or against).</p>	Supported. Common framework for consultation/messaging required as to not politicise the exercise. Community engagement to be designed to demonstrate how the community will (or not) benefit from proposal.

8	If a successful community-initiated elector poll requests councils to consider amalgamation, the Minister for Local Government should request the Local Government Board to develop a formal amalgamation proposal and put it to a community vote.	Not supported. This recommendation invites potential conflict in situations where one council area votes for amalgamation when their neighbour either hasn't voted or does not support it.	Not supported. If implemented elector poll threshold needs to be agreed in advance of process eg (x) % of registered voters across impacted municipal areas.
9	The new Local Government Act should provide that the Minister for Local Government can require councils to participate in identified shared service or shared staffing arrangements.	Supported in principle.  This recommendation was inevitable once the Government ruled out forced amalgamations and also given the feedback regarding the fragility of shared service arrangements. It is understood there will be challenges in reaching consensus when developing shared service agreements. However, it is difficult to support mandatory shared service arrangements without knowing more details. It is proposed that LGATs submission note there needs to be more engagement with the sector about when a model could be imposed, but at the same time there is support for the investigation of shared service arrangements that provide economic and social	Supported in principle.
10	Give councils the opportunity to design identified shared service arrangements themselves, with a model only being imposed if councils cannot reach consensus.		Supported in principle.
11	Before endorsing a particular mandatory shared service arrangement, the minister for Local Government should seek the advice of the Local Government Board.		Seek to strengthen wording. Replace 'should' with 'will'.
12	If councils are unable to reach consensus on a mandatory		

	<p>service sharing agreement, the Minister for Local Government should have the power to require councils to participate in a specific model or models the Tasmanian Government has developed.</p>	<p>benefits for the community, and increased collaboration between councils to improve service delivery.</p>	
13	<p>The first priorities for developing mandatory shared service arrangements should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing of key technical staff;</li> <li>• sharing of common digital business systems and ICT infrastructure; and</li> <li>• sharing of asset management expertise through a centralised, council-owned authority.</li> </ul>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>These priorities were expected. However, it is proposed that LGATs submission note further significant engagement with councils is required. While many in our sector have noted there are significant opportunities in moving to common digital business systems, this would be a long term, costly and highly disruptive process.</p>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>Sharing of key technical staff is challenging when resources in the state are scarce and there is little to no growth in building surveyors, EHOs etc. Broader thought needs to go into relaxing legislation to allow for para professionals to undertake certain functions.</p> <p>An alternate approach to qualifications in technical areas needs to be considered along with attracting a future workforce into technical roles. For example, UTAS no longer offers qualification for EHOs due to lack of enrolment numbers. Perhaps graduate or apprentice based school program models could be considered with sector sponsorship/scholarship.</p> <p>State should consider establishing a central authority to manage common</p>

			<p>ICT platform and manage contract service for SAAS and potential IAAS.</p> <p>Common platform needs to be designed around the customer with integrated asset and finance systems as a minimum for all councils.</p> <p>Council subscriptions may include various suite/module options, however any system changes need to be accepted across sector prior to implementation eg no local customisation.</p> <p>Only one cloud instance should be supported to reduce costs.</p> <p>State will need to budget many millions to implement ICT.</p> <p>Sharing of asset management expertise through a centralised, council-owned authority supported. Common AMF and principles to be enforced eg ULE's and depreciation rates. State may need to assist with funding for any renewal gaps identified as part of the process.</p>
14	Include a statutory requirement for councils to consult with	Supported in principle.	Supported.



	local communities to identify wellbeing priorities, objectives, and outcomes in a new Local Government Act. Once identified, councils would be required to integrate the priorities into their strategic planning, service delivery and decision-making processes.	Council's role in wellbeing and the potential to expand it has been consistently raised within and outside our sector. Many councils are already doing significant work in this area. It is proposed that LGATs submission ask what additional funding will be available if councils expand their role in this area.	Clarity on Council's role in community health and wellbeing required.  Victorian model is a good example.
15	To be eligible to stand for election to council, all candidates should first undertake – within six months prior to nominating – a prescribed, mandatory education session, to ensure all candidates understand the role of councillor and their responsibilities if elected.	Supported.  The Review of the Local Government Act already included this reform.	Supported.
16	The Tasmanian Government and the local government sector should jointly develop and implement a contemporary, best practice learning and ongoing professional development framework for elected members. As part of this framework, under a new Local Government Act:	Supported.  Work on this is well underway with the Learning and Development Framework. The Review of the Local Government Act included the development of core competences and an "induction plan" following each election. Although this recommendation	Supported.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all elected members – including both new and returning councillors – should be required to complete a prescribed ‘core’ learning and development program within the first 12 months of being elected; and</li> <li>• councils should be required to prepare, at the beginning of each new term, an elected member learning and capability development plan to support the broader ongoing professional development needs of their elected members.</li> </ul>	now makes completion of the program compulsory.	
17	The Tasmanian Government should further investigate and consider introducing an alternative framework for councils to raise revenue from major commercial operations in their local government areas, where rates based on the improved value of land are not an efficient, effective, or equitable form of taxation.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>This recommendation predominantly relates to electricity generation (wind and solar farms) and mining.</p>	Supported.
18	The Tasmanian Government should work with the sector and the development industry	Supported.	Supported.

	to further investigate and consider introducing a marginal cost-based integrated developer charging regime.	This is as a direct result of LGATs advocacy for an infrastructure charging regime. The Government has recognised the need for this in the Housing Strategy, work on the Tasmanian Planning Policies and elsewhere.	Along with development of developer infrastructure guidelines and common suite of minimum standards.
19	Introduce additional minimum information requirements for council rates notices to improve public transparency, accountability, and confidence in council rating and financial management decisions.	Supported.  This is to ensure consistency and comparability in rates notes, presented in a plain English format.	Supported.
20	Within the context of the national framework, the Tasmanian Government should seek advice from the State Grants Commission on how it will ensure the Financial Assistance Grants methodology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is transparent and well understood by councils and the community,</li> <li>• that assistance is being targeted efficiently and effectively, and</li> <li>• is not acting as a disincentive for councils to pursue structural reform opportunities.</li> </ul>	Supported.  This is responding to sector advocacy and also the Boards difficulty in gaining an understanding of the methodology used by the State Grants Commission.	Supported.  Methodology of SGC's in other jurisdictions should be compared.

21	The Tasmanian Government should review the total amount of Heavy Vehicle Motor Tax Revenue made available to councils and consider basing this total amount on service usage data.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>This is as a direct result of LGATs advocacy.</p>	Supported.
22	Introduce a framework for council fees and charges in a new Local Government Act, to support the expanded, equitable and transparent utilisation of fees and charges to fund certain council services.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>The Review of the Local Government Act included this reform. Fees charged under a fee-for-service model should consider the cost to deliver the service as well as any policy objective of the council. However, for some councils this will be a time-consuming exercise to work out accurate cost attribution</p>	Supported.
23	The Tasmanian Government should review the current rating system under the Local Government Act to make it simpler, more equitable, and more predictable for landowners. The review should only be undertaken following implementation of the Board's other rating and revenue recommendations	<p>Supported.</p> <p>This in part relates to recommendation 17 and LGATs advocacy on Independent Living Units. The separate UTAS report for funding reform options is also a key driver of this recommendation.</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>State assistance will be required to assist councils and educate communities on any changes to rating systems in place.</p>

24	The Tasmanian Government should work with the sector to develop, resource, and implement a best practice local government performance monitoring system.	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>It is proposed that LGATs submission note that the measures used should be service delivery outcomes focused and help councils to initiate improvements to performance.</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>Victorian ‘know your council’ model should be considered</p>
25	The Tasmanian Government should develop a clear and consistent set of guidelines for the collection, recording, and publication of datasets that underpin the new performance reporting system to improve overall data consistency and integrity, and prescribe data methodologies and protocols via a Ministerial Order or similar mechanism.	<p>Any performance monitoring system should aim to reduce the reporting burden on councils by streamlining reporting requirements and using existing data sources.</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>Victorian ‘know your council’ model should be considered.</p>
26	The new Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework should actively inform and drive education, compliance, and regulatory enforcement activities for the sector, and entities with responsibility for compliance monitoring and management – including the Office of Local Government and council audit panels – should be properly empowered	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>It is proposed that LGATs submission note that the Office of Local Government should be sufficiently resourced and funded by the State Government, the sector should not be expected to fund their regulatory oversight functions as suggested on page 88 of the final report. While internal audit provides a valuable role and many councils have an existing</p>	<p>Support LGATs position.</p>

	<p>and resourced to effectively deliver their roles.</p> <p>As part of this the Tasmanian Government should consider introducing a requirement for councils to have an internal audit function given their responsibilities for managing significant public assets and resources, and whether this requirement needs to be legislated or otherwise mandated. Consideration should also be given to resourcing internal audit via service sharing or pooling arrangements, particularly for smaller councils.</p>	<p>program already, this will be difficult to resource for many councils, particularly if the focus areas / scope is determined by the audit panels, which is what the final report implies. The final report notes that “Consideration should also be given to resourcing internal audit via service sharing or pooling arrangements, particularly for smaller councils. LGAT may be well placed to provide support for joint procurement for these councils of a shared capability.” While LGAT could do this, there is already a number of competent consultancy firms undertaking this work for councils and so the need and value of an LGAT joint procurement process needs to be established.</p>	
27	<p>The Tasmanian Government should collaborate with the local government sector to support a genuine, co-regulatory approach to councils’ regulatory responsibilities, with state agencies providing ongoing professional support to council staff and involving councils in all stages of regulatory design and implementation.</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>This is as a direct result of LGATs advocacy. The new Charter for Local Government could capture this co-regulatory approach.</p>	<p>Supported.</p>

28	The Tasmanian Government should work with the local government sector to pursue opportunities for strengthened partnerships between local government and Service Tasmania.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>This seeks to mirror the arrangements established by Devonport City Council. While meritorious, the work involved to achieve it may be significant.</p>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>Concept of single point of service customers to access local, state and commonwealth services has merit.</p> <p>Some councils may be better placed to provide this service (with resource). Especially those away from major service centres.</p>
29	Councils should migrate over time to common digital business systems and ICT infrastructure that meet their needs for digital business services, with support from the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Digital Strategy and Services (DSS).	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>See response to Recommendation 13.</p>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>See response to Recommendation 13.</p>
30	The Tasmanian Government – in consultation with the sector – should review the current legislative requirements on councils for strategic financial and asset management planning documentation to simplify and streamline the requirements and support more consistent and transparent compliance.	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>It has been almost 10 years since these requirements were introduced. They were nation leading at the time and are still very comprehensive. It is probably timely for a review. It is proposed that LGATs submission note that this is a very ambitious recommendation and would be a long-term project that would need</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>National frameworks such as IPWEA NMAF provides models.</p>

		to be sufficiently resourced and funded.	
31	The Tasmanian Government – in consultation with the sector – should investigate the viability of, and seek to implement wherever possible, standardised useful asset life ranges for all major asset classes.	Supported.  This comes as a direct result of council feedback.	Supported.  National frameworks such as IPWEA NAMAF provides models.
32	All Tasmanian councils should be required under a new Local Government Act to develop and adopt community engagement strategies – underpinned by clear deliberative engagement principles.	Supported.  The Review of the Local Government Act included this reform.	Supported.  Similar to Victorian model.
33	A new Local Government Act should require councils, when developing and adopting their Community Engagement Strategies, to clearly set out how they will consult on, assess, and communicate the community impact of all significant new services or infrastructure.	Supported.  This is in response to sector feedback on councils being the ‘provider of last resort’ – GP clinics as an example. However, should this be mandated then criteria will need to be established to determine what new services and infrastructure would be subject to a community impact assessment.	Supported.  This should not be an avenue or step towards the introduction of rate capping which has occurred in Victoria.



34	Following the phase 1 voluntary amalgamation program, the Tasmanian Government should commission an independent review into councillor numbers and allowances.	Supported.  The sector raised this during LGATs stage 1 consultation.	Supported with a view to enhance sector capability and community representation.
35	The Tasmanian Government should expedite reforms already agreed and/or in train in respect of statutory sanctions available to deal with councillor misconduct or poor performance.	Supported.	
36	<p>The Tasmanian Government should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to develop and implement – in consultation with councils and their staff – a workforce development toolkit tailored to the sector and aligned with the Tasmanian Government’s workforce development system;</li> <li>• support councils to update their workforce plans at the time of any consolidation;</li> <li>• support LGAT to lead the development and</li> </ul>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>Workforce attraction and retention was routinely raised as a key issue by the sector. It is proposed that LGATs submission note that to be successful this work also needs to have buy in from education and training institutions to support the strategies and actions to meet skills shortages.</p>	<p>LGAT’s comments supported. This echo’s George Town Council’s own advocacy efforts.</p> <p>Further recommend that the legislative environment in which technical officers operate needs to be reviewed and relaxed with regard to qualifications.</p>

	<p>implementation of a state-wide approach to workforce development for key technical staff, beginning with environmental health officers, planners, engineers and building inspectors;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise in statute that workforce development is an ongoing responsibility of council general managers and is included as part of the new Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework; and</li> <li>• include simple indicators of each council's workforce profile in the proposed council performance dashboard.</li> </ul>		
37	<p>The Tasmanian Government should partner with, and better support, councils to build capacity and capability to plan for and respond to emergency events and climate change impacts</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>This is as a direct result of LGAT and council advocacy. The \$500,000 climate change capacity building program LGAT has recently commenced provides a good starting point to support this recommendation.</p>	<p>Supported in principle.</p> <p>State support needs to be extended to investment in upgrade of assets to accommodate current and forecast risk profiles.</p> <p>MAV JLT should also be engaged to identify and assist in mitigation, adaptation and resilience to climate related events.</p>