



Local Government Association Tasmania

General Meeting

Minutes

27 March 2020

Meeting held via
GOTOWebinar

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**PROCEDURAL MATTERS.
RULES REGARDING CONDUCT OF MEETINGS**

13. WHO MAY ATTEND A MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION

- (a) Each Member shall be entitled to send a voting delegate to any Meeting of the Association, such voting delegate exercising the number of votes determined according to Rule 16(a).
- (b) After each ordinary Council election, the Chief Executive Officer shall request each Member to advise the name of its voting delegate and the proxy for the voting delegate for Meetings of the Association until the next ordinary Council elections.
- (c) Members may change their voting delegate or proxy at any time by advising the Chief Executive Officer in writing over the hand of the voting delegate or the General Manager prior to that delegate taking his or her position at a Meeting.
- (d) A list of voting delegates will be made available at the commencement of any Meeting of the Association.
- (e) Members may send other elected members or Council officers as observers to any Meeting of the Association.

14. PROXIES AT MEETINGS

- (a) Up to 1 hour prior to any Meeting of the Association, a Member may appoint another Member as its proxy.
- (b) The form of the proxy is to be provided by the Chief Executive Officer and is to be signed by either the Mayor or General Manager of the Council appointing the proxy.
- (c) The Chair of the meeting is not entitled to inquire as to whether the proxy has cast any vote in accordance with the wishes of the Member appointing the proxy.
- (d) Proxies count for the purposes of voting and quorum at any meeting.

15. QUORUM AT MEETINGS

At any Meeting of the Association, a majority of the Member Councils shall constitute a quorum.

16. VOTING AT MEETINGS

- (a) Voting at any Meeting of the Association shall be upon the basis of each voting delegate being provided with, immediately prior to the meeting, a placard which is to be used for the purpose of voting at the meeting. The placard will be coloured according to the number of votes to which the Member is entitled:

Population of the Council Area	Number of votes entitled to be exercised by the voting delegate	Colour placard to be raised by the voting delegate when voting
Under 10,000	1	Red
10,000 – 19,999	2	White
20,000 – 39,999	3	Blue
40,000 and above	4	Green

- (b) The Chairman of the meeting shall be entitled to rely upon the raising of a coloured placard as the recording of the vote for the Member and as evidence of the number of votes being cast.
- (c) Except as provided in sub-rule (d), each question, matter or resolution shall be decided by a majority of the votes capable of being cast by Members present at the Meeting. If there is an equal number of votes upon any question, it shall be declared not carried.
- (d)
 - (i) When a vote is being taken to amend a Policy of the Association, the resolution must be carried by a majority of the votes capable of being cast by Members, whether present at the Meeting or not.
 - (ii) When a vote is being taken for the Association to sign a protocol, memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement, the resolution must be carried by a majority of votes capable of being cast by Members and by a majority of Members, whether present at the Meeting or not.
 - (iii) When a vote is being taken to amend the Rules of the Association, the resolution must be carried by at least two-thirds of the votes capable of being cast by Members, whether present at the Meeting or not.

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** Denotes Attachment*

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GENERAL MEETING SCHEDULE

- 9.30** **Coffee and tea on arrival**
- 9.45am** **Meeting Commences**
- 10.15** **Mr Craig Limpkin**
Director Local Government

Because of the requirements around physical distancing related to the COVID 19 State of Emergency the General Meeting was held electronically via GOTO Webinar. The President acknowledged the unusual circumstances and the difficulty in strictly adhering to LGAT's rules. Voting was conducted through voting delegates electronically raising hands and manual transfer of votes to a spreadsheet which applied weighting.

1. GOVERNANCE

Acknowledgement of Country

The President acknowledged and paid respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of this land.

Welcome and Apologies

Break O'Day/Southern Midlands

That Items 1.1-1.7 be considered collectively and resolved if no exceptions are raised.

Resolved

1.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES *

Decision Sought

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2019, as circulated, be confirmed.

Resolved

Background:

The Minutes of the General Meeting held on 6 December 2019, as circulated, are submitted for confirmation and are at **Attachment to Item 1.1.**

1.2 BUSINESS ARISING *

Decision Sought

That Members note the information.

Resolved

Background:

At Attachment to Item 1.2 is a schedule of business considered at the previous meeting and its status.

1.3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

Decision Sought

That consideration be given to the Agenda items and the order of business.

Resolved

Background:

The Agenda was restructured as follows:

Items 1-1.7 moved collectively for resolution.

Item 1.8 Deferred.

Items 4.1-4.11 moved collectively for resolution.

Presentation Craig Limkin

Item 2.1 Deferred

Item 2.2 – Item 2.4

Late Item 2.5

Any other business

1.4 FOLLOW UP OF MOTIONS *

Decision Sought

That Members note the following report.

Resolved

Background:

A table detailing action taken to date in relation to motions passed at previous meetings is at Attachment to Item 1.4.

1.5 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Decision Sought

That Members note the report on activity from 20 November 2019 to 6 March 2020.

Resolved

Meetings and Events

- ALGA Strategic Planning
- CEO Performance Review Committee
- Charitable Rates Steering Committee Meetings
- Charitable Rates Roundtable
- LGAT CEO regular catch ups by phone or face to face
- LGAT General Meeting
- LGAT GMC Meeting
- Mayor's Workshop
- PLGC Meeting
- Senator Andrew Wilkie
- Senator Jacqui Lambie

Media and Communications

- Advocate re Redress
- Letter to editor Planning Reform
- Letter to editor re Air BnB
- LG Focus
- Mercury re Australia Day Dress
- MR Joint with CCA re MOU
- MR LGAT Year in Review
- MR re IWD Awards
- MR Thanking Outgoing Premier/Congratulating New Premier
- MR welcoming Mark Coulton to General Meeting
- Pulse

1.6 CEO REPORT

Decision Sought

That Members note the report on activity from 20 November 2019 to 6 March 2020.

Resolved

Policy, Projects and Presentations

- LGAT Budget Submission
- Presentation to TasWater Hackathon
- Presentation to Australian College of Health Service Managers
- Event Planning – conference, EM Weekend, etc.
- Charitable Rates Exemptions
- Elected Member Weekend
- International Women’s Day Awards Lunch

Media and Communications

- Pulse, LG Tas and LinkedIn Contributions
- Editor Kingborough Chronicle/ Kingborough AGM
- Letter to audit office re pricing
- News Clippings
- Examiner query re targeted review of Act.
- LGAT Year in Review
- Mercury re General Manager remuneration.
- ABC re stormwater/reuse and code of conduct.
- Individual councilor advice and correspondence.

Meetings, Training and Events.

- Advisor to Minister Shelton
- Ald Ewington Clarence re Health Motion last General Meeting
- ALGA Strategic Planning
- Bullyology re possible LG Program
- Business Growth Strategy Industry RoundTable
- Catholic Care/Centacare Evolve Housing
- CEO TasPlan
- Charitable Rates Steering Committee Meetings and Roundtable
- Chief of Staff and Advisors to Minister Jaensch – waste and planning matters
- Driverless Bus Trial
- General Management Committee
- Glamorgan Spring Bay Council with Director of LG/ Roles and Responsibilities Session
- International Women’s Day Awards Steering Committee and Judging Panel
- Kerry Vincent/Mel Gray re SERDA
- Leadership and Change Consultants re possible LG Program

- LGAT Assist Board Meeting
- LGAT CEO regular catch ups by phone or face to face
- LGAT General Meeting
- LGAT GMC Meeting
- Local Government Professionals Board Meeting
- Local Government Division re rates
- MAV Insurance Board
- Mayor and General Manager Huon Valley re Planning and other matters
- Mayor's Workshop
- Meeting Greater Hobart GMs re waste issues
- Oz Help re resilience training for EM Weekend.
- Performance Review Committee
- PLGC Meeting
- PLGC Officials
- RDA Tas Board Meeting
- Safeguarding Volunteering Steering Committee
- Senator Andrew Wilkie
- Senator Jacqui Lambie
- Stakeholder Catch Up Audit Office
- Stakeholder Appreciation Event
- The Mercury re council advertising

Operations

- TasPlan Session for LGAT Staff
- Performance Review Executive Assistant
- Demonstration of My Interview online tool
- Recruitment for admin officer and project officer.
- Finalized move to modernized staff contracts and new IR suite.

1.7 MONTHLY REPORTS TO COUNCILS

Decision Sought

That Members note changes to the monthly activity report and that this item will be removed from future agendas.

Resolved

Background:

The LGAT monthly activity report was previously emailed to all Members. To streamline reporting and make the LGAT monthly activity report easier to read, it is now presented in a

dashboard format as part of the Pulse monthly newsletter. The detail behind the reporting dashboard is available on request.

1.8 COUNCIL ROUND UPS – DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING

That Members determine who will present a briefing at the next meeting.

This Item was deferred.

Background comment:

Derwent Valley Council has offered to conduct a brief presentation on a matter that is of interest in their municipality.

The session also allows time for questions and provides an opportunity to briefly share and highlight problems or opportunities facing councils.

2. ITEMS FOR DECISION

2.1 CHARITABLE RATES

Contact Officer – Katrena Stephenson

1. That Members note the report on LGAT’s advocacy efforts around securing legislative change to enable equitable rating of Independent Living Units in Retirement Villages.
2. That Members note that LGAT has been unable to secure Government commitment to legislative change.
3. That Members endorse a formal campaign for change, overseen by the Charitable Rates Exemption Steering Committee.

This Item was Deferred to a Future Meeting

Background

In March 2019 Members endorsed the following motion:

That LGAT establish a working group and seek legal advice if necessary, to develop a proposed amendment to section 87 of the Local Government Act, and specifically in regard to the definition charitable purpose, with a view to providing certainty and social equity in the application of rating exemptions.

That LGAT seek a firm commitment from the State Government to commence a review of the rating exemption provisions in the Local Government Act, with amendment to proceed as soon as practicable and ahead of the broader legislative review timeframes.

Since then LGAT has continued to develop a case and advocate for change in relation to the rating of independent living units. The Steering Committee continues to meet regularly, and advocacy has been supported through the engagement of Timmins Ray.

Additionally, the LGAT CEO met with the CEOs of TasCOSS and ACSA (Aged and Community Services Australia) on several occasions to discuss their concerns and to determine whether common ground could be reached. This was considered critical in progressing the matter with the Government. While some progress was made in establishing some common principles, it had become increasingly clear to the Steering Committee that such an approach was unlikely to deliver a successful outcome in time for the budget process for councils for 2020-21. To that end, the President outlined clearly our desired outcomes and timeframe in a letter to the Treasurer, the Minister, TasCOSS and ACSA on the 29 November 2019.

The Government indicated they would like to engage with critical stakeholders at a round table. LGAT made it clear that a round table must include the Treasurer and Minister for Local Government. The round table was to proceed on 20 January but was derailed by the resignation of the then Premier, Will Hodgman. While it was difficult to line up the key stakeholders, particularly with the full diary of the Premier/Treasurer, a meeting connecting the Premier and President in Launceston with the Local Government Minister, LGAT CEO and other stakeholders in Hobart via teleconference, took place on 14 February.

Key matters arising from the meeting were as follows:

- The Premier advised no options (including no legislative change) were off the table but that there were arguments on both sides.
- He wanted any solution to consider the following principles: equitable outcomes, avoidance of cost shifting and broader impacts; transparency, able to stand the test of time, certainty for both sides, consideration of transitional issues.
- The Premier considered that a one size fits all solution was unlikely.
- The CEOs of TasCOSS and ACSA had both moved on and with new representatives at the table for the first time, old ground had to be recovered.
- The Minister for Local Government expressed a clear concern for those who had already bought into retirement village ILUS.
- Working back from the March LGAT General Meeting date it was agreed that a more detailed proposal would be provided to ACSA and TasCOSS to engage with their members on, model and then provide feedback on from their perspective.
- The Charitable Rates Exemption Steering Committee convened and agreed this meant that there would be no certainty ahead of council budgeting and rate setting activities.
- The President wrote to the Premier outlining concerns and seeking an additional urgent meeting with LGAT and foreshadowing that we would be seeking support from Members for a more vigorous campaign for change at the March meeting.

At the time of writing no meeting had occurred with the Premier. Some work has been undertaken with DPAC on a proposed model of change but there has not been internal endorsement or commencement of engagement with providers.

Budget Impact

GMC discussed the possible budgetary impact of a campaign and agreed that if additional funding above that budgeted should be required this should be funded from reserves rather than a call on members at this stage.

Current Policy

As per the March 2019 Meeting resolution.

Strategic Plan:

Promoting Financial Sustainability

Priority Area 2- Support the sector through the next stages of Local Government Reform

2.2 HEADWORKS*

Council – Brighton

Burnie City Council/Kingborough Council

That the motion (2.2) be deferred to be discussed at a later date with some research to be undertaken by LGAT ahead of further consideration.

Carried by Simple Majority

Decision Sought

That LGAT advocate to the State Government and TasWater for the ceasing of the 'headworks holiday' for sewer and water infrastructure.

The Motion has been deferred to a later date.

Background

The Tasmanian Government imposed a 'headworks holiday' for a period of two years with regards to TasWater, which was then extended indefinitely. The primary goal was to facilitate development. However, there are many cases in several municipalities where the opposite is occurring.

The current system creates an untenable 'first mover' cost, which is highly inequitable and is causing key strategic growth areas to sit undeveloped.

This issue was discussed at the November 2019 STCA meeting where it was resolved to write to LGAT (letter and response included at **Attachment to Item 2.2** and **2.2a**).

LGAT Comment

The State Government initially introduced a 'headworks holiday' in late 2014 for a 2-year period. At the completion of this period the TasWater Board determined that it would continue the headworks holiday, and it remains today.

TasWater has indicated that this position is currently under review as part of the development of their Pricing and Service Plan 4 (PSP4) submission, due on 30th June 2020. As part of their preparation of their PSP4, TasWater has developed a specific options paper on developer charges. To inform this options paper, TasWater convened three forums to understand perceptions around their current developer charges approach and role in economic development, through November 2018 to February 2019 in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport. These sessions were attended by representatives from Local Government, State Government, the development industry and associated

professionals. Participants in each of the locations expressed a strong desire for TasWater to reconsider their approach to developer charges.

At the time of writing TasWater was planning to hold further sessions on the 16th and 17th March 2020 in Hobart and Launceston respectively to consider their approach to developer charges and to discuss alternative options. All Tasmanian Councils have been invited to the sessions.

Budget Implications

Does not apply.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

Building Local Government's Reputation

Facilitating Change.

2.3 TIMING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Break O'Day Council/Central Highlands Council

That LGAT member councils ask the State Government to consider reviewing the timing of the next Local Government Elections.

Lost

Background

The next Local Government elections are in October 2022. Earlier that year Tasmanian voters will have also participated in State and Federal elections. It is suggested this may lead to voter fatigue with a negative impact on Local Government voter participation.

It is suggested that a 6-month extension to the current 4 year term be sought with a view to overcoming voter fatigue.

LGAT Comment

2018 also saw three elections in the same year. Voter turnout for Local Government elections was relatively strong however some councils experienced a high informal vote.

If Members are supportive of the concept there is opportunity provided through the Local Government Legislative Review process to progress this position.

Budget Implications

Does not apply.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

Building Local Government's Reputation

Facilitating Change.

2.4 NEWSTART *

Brighton Council/City of Hobart

That LGAT Members recognise the low rate of the Newstart Allowance is contributing to an increase of poverty, poor health and homelessness for recipients within Tasmania and that LGAT advocate in writing to all relevant State and Federal ministers that the Newstart rate be increased.

Carried

Background

The rate of the Newstart Allowance has not kept pace with most living costs, especially housing expenses. There are many municipalities in Tasmania where this has a significant impact on the community. In Brighton where the population is younger than average and there is long term disadvantage across a range of measures, such as financial, health, literacy, disability, the effects of the additional strain caused by the low Newstart Allowance can be severe.

The links between financial stress and poverty with poor health, crime, violence and other community issues are well-documented. As the closest tier of government to the community, a key role of local government is to advocate to state and federal government in the interests of their community.

Background is provided at **Attachment to Item 2.4.**

LGAT Comment

While this undoubtedly an issue of community concern it is not clearly aligned to LGAT's functions or strategic priorities.

Budget Implications

Does not apply.

Current Policy

Not aligned with Strategic Priorities

2.5 COVID RELIEF *

That LGAT Voting Representatives agree to take back the following relief mechanisms, to their Council for determination of a formal position on them as soon as practicable from this point in time with a review before 30 June 2020.

Kingborough Council/Burnie City

- 1. No penalties, charges, interest or debt collection for late rates payments and extended payment periods (with such measures in place) until 30 June 2020**

Carried Unanimously

Glenorchy City Council/Burnie City Council

- 2. Rent relief on council owned buildings where tenants are experiencing financial hardship until 30 June 2020.**

Carried Unanimously

Tasman Council/Glenorchy City Council

- 3. A common approach to hardship/assistance policies with LGAT to develop a model policy based on engagement with councils.**

Carried Unanimously

Glenorchy/Brighton

- 4a. Community grants to be refocused as appropriate to support local business and not for profit recovery or conversion to a digital environment or circular economy until 30 June 2021.**
- 4b. As a means of supporting local business recovery and injecting funds into communities in a timely manner, councils be encouraged to settle creditor invoices within a maximum 14-day timeframe (or sooner), irrespective of normal trading terms.**

Carried Unanimously

Glenorchy City Council/Central Coast Council

- 5. A 0% increase on general rates for 2020-21 but with the ability to increase fees and charges but not at a rate which will exceed the benefits of a 0% increase to general rates.**

Amendment Motion

Dorset Council/Burnie City Council

A 0% increase on general rates, service rates, fees and charges for 2020-21

Amendment Lost

Amendment Motion

Kingborough Council/City of Hobart

A 0% increase on general rates for 2020-21 but fees and charges may be indexed by CPI .

Amendment Carried

FINAL MOTION:

City of Hobart/Waratah Wynyard Council

A 0% increase on general rates for 2020-21 but fees and charges may be indexed by CPI .

Carried

City of Hobart/Huon Valley Council

- 6. Seek the option of relaxing depreciation requirements or extending standard asset life for 2020-21 upon agreed criteria with the Auditor General (including asset condition) and subject to the Auditor General adjusting financial indicators accordingly.**

CARRIED

Background

Mayors and General Managers had discussions via webconference on Tuesday 24 March about possible approaches to relief that could be agreed sectorally.

Notes and questions from that meeting and a draft motion were circulated for comment.

The State Government have indicated through addresses in Parliament and legislation that there is an expectation that Local Government will assist in addressing the burden on communities triggered by COVID 19 emergency actions.

Some councils raised concerns that not all councils were equally in a position to provide the full range of relief discussed. The CEO noted on behalf of Flinders and King Island who were not able to attend, their concerns that financial viability would be at risk in face of providing financial relief.

LGAT Comment

N/A

Budget Implications

N/A

Current Policy

Priority 2. Building Local Government's Reputation

Priority 3. Fostering Collaboration

Priority 4. Promoting financial sustainability.

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3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ELECTED MEMBERS Contact Officer – Katrena Stephenson

Decision Sought

That Members discuss what constitutes best practice for Elected Member Professional Development.

This Item was Deferred to a later date.

Background

At the February General Management Committee (GMC), a discussion on sector reputation highlighted varying levels of commitment to professional development for and by Elected Members. It was agreed this would be worthy of a broader discussion with a view to assisting LGAT's service planning and advocacy.

Consultation with Members on State Government proposals regarding elected member professional development as part of the Local Government Legislative Review revealed the following:

- The concept of capability requirements for elected members generated the most discussion in this theme area. While some councils expressed limited support, others were strongly opposed on the basis that there is no similar requirement of those elected to State and Federal Government. Even where there was support, there were questions as to how the requirements would be applied - particularly where a councillor was returned rather than new to Council.
- It is LGAT's view that community and candidate education is vital to strong election outcomes. LGAT believes there would be support from our Members for candidates to at least engage with some online training prior to nominating, to cover the basics of their roles, and in particular to help them better understand what will be required when they act as a Planning Authority.
- The broader question of mandatory training for councillors which is often raised was considered as part of the Targeted Review and at that time, LGAT's submission noted:
"The majority of responding councils felt there should be compulsory induction following elections and that even returning councillors should participate. Others felt that returning councillors might not require the full induction, more a tighter, tailored briefing in recognition of their experience. The focus of any compulsory training should be on **governance, planning and meeting procedures and supported by an ongoing professional development** program. At the July 2015 LGAT General Meeting a motion regarding compulsory training for councillors was amended and

carried as follows: *That all councillors be encouraged to undertake training courses i.e. Planning, Legislation, Code of Conduct, Meeting Procedures etc.*”

In relation to the proposal for core capability requirements for elected members outlined in the Review of the Local Government Act Directions paper we note the following:

- There was no consensus on this matter and particularly during workshops this was described as an overly prescriptive direction.
- It was noted by some that because Local Government is no different to State and Federal Governments in that the elected members are democratically elected, at most this should take the form of guidelines.
- Others suggested that training extend beyond planning and Local Government to include topics directly relevant to the role of an elected member (e.g. meeting procedure training).
- One Council raised concern around the term ‘core capability’ as it implies there may be a pass or fail scenario for elected members. This Council suggested it be changed to ‘professional development’.
- It was uncertain how weight would be given to experience both on and off Council.
- Training needs to be delivered in plain English and accessible via multiple platforms.
- Questions were raised as to how it would be implemented and how it would be affordable and accessible relative to the councillor’s role and allowances.

And in relation to the proposal for reporting training there was not strong support. One reason given by councils for not supporting this reform is the different level of training required by each elected member, according to their skills, background and experience (i.e. yearly reports will not provide a complete picture of capability and/or existing qualifications). Others, however, see merit in reporting core capability training and in extending this reform to all councillor professional development.

The following feedback was received through the LGAT Performance and Improvement Survey:

- New Councillor Resources (online) and the Councillor Resource kit were the most highly rated LGAT resources.
- Suggestions for resources and tools included a Deputy Mayor toolkit, best practice templates and policies, speed reading and advanced planning authority training.
- Respondents noted they would like to see additional councillor workshops (at convenient times and places) covering a diversity of topics (e.g. project management, grant seeking, dealing with ratepayers and case studies) as well as documents and templates (e.g. best practice and discussion papers, technical reports, and data) – including guidance on how to utilise these resources.

Uptake of LGAT training offerings can be variable. While some short/focussed topics could be offered online, detailed, longer or practically focussed professional development must be face-to-face and generally requires a minimum number of attendees for viability, particularly

when an external provider is required. LGAT continues to offer brokerage services for councils wishing to deliver training locally or regionally.

Budget Impact

Does not apply.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

Developing capacity and capability to deliver

DRAFT

4. ITEMS FOR NOTING

Kingborough Council/Dorset Council

That Items 4.1-4.11 be considered collectively and resolved unless exceptions are raised.

Resolved

4.1 LG ACT REVIEW

Contact Officer – Katrena Stephenson

That the Meeting note that at the time of writing, there has been no further advice from the State Government regarding either appointment of a new Director of Local Government or the Legislative Review. However, Craig Limpkin, Deputy Secretary Department of Premier and Cabinet, will present to the Meeting.

Resolved

Background

Further to the report last meeting, we are still awaiting advice from the Government following public consultation on the Directions paper and recommendations from the Steering Committee.

DPAC Deputy Secretary Craig Limkin is Acting Director Local Government.

Budget Impact

Does not apply.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

Facilitating Change

Priority Area 2 Support the sector through the next stages of Local Government Reform

4.2 COASTAL HAZARDS

Contact Officer – Michael Edrich

That Members note the following report on Coastal Hazards.

Resolved

Background

LGAT has undertaken considerable advocacy on behalf of coastal Tasmanian councils regarding the problems they have been experiencing to do with managing coastal hazards and the response from the Tasmanian Government. For a full background and history on this issue, please refer to the minutes of LGAT's December 2018 General Committee Meeting¹.

LGAT's advocacy has consisted of targeted discussions with relevant Tasmanian Government personnel and escalation to the Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC), describing the nature of the problem experienced and how State and Local Government can work together more effectively to improve the management of Tasmania's coastline.

As a direct result of LGAT's advocacy, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment (DPIPWE) has published their previously internal principles for managing coastal hazards². This is an important first step in providing better coordination between coastal managers by declaring the State's position on these matters.

Also in response to LGAT's representation on this issue, the State Government has announced through the Premier's Local Government Council (PLGC)³ that it will establish a State Planning Interdepartmental Committee (SPIDC) on priority planning matters and that the next steps for the State Coastal Policy will be considered by the SPIDC and provided to the Government. This is important because DPIPWE's principles for managing coastal hazards are determined in large part by the framework set by the State Coastal Policy.

LGAT will continue its work in advocating for improved collaboration and coordination between State and Local Government coastal managers.

Budget Impact

Being undertaken within current resources.

¹ Found here: <http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/minutesAgendas/Minutes%2010%20Dec-1.pdf>

² Managing Coastal Hazards, DPIPWE: <https://dipwe.tas.gov.au/about-the-department/managing-coastal-hazards>

³ See December 2019 PLGC Communique:
http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/502629/PLGC_Meeting_58_-_9_December_2019_Communique.pdf

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Facilitating change;
- Fostering collaboration; and
- Promoting financial sustainability.

4.3 WASTE

Contact Officer – Dion Lester

That members note the update on State and National waste policy.

Resolved

The LGAT Policy Director advised that despite a recent COAG decision on timelines for waste bans, matters have been put on the back burner as COVID 19 priorities are being addressed.

Background

In late September, LGAT provided a submission on behalf of Local Government to the draft Waste Action Plan (WAP). Our submission is available on the LGAT [website here](#). The State Government is currently considering feedback on the draft WAP. It is unlikely the final WAP will be released prior to further details being announced on the national waste export ban (see further below) and is also likely to be subject to the State Budget considerations.

LGAT has met with the new Minister for the Environment's staff to ensure that Local Government's agenda is recognised.

National Waste Export Ban

In late 2019 COAG agreed to a national waste export ban, commencing on 1 July 2020 with a phased approach. Ministers agreed the phase out should be completed by the following dates:

- All waste glass by July 2020.
- Mixed waste plastics by July 2021.
- All whole tyres including baled tyres by December 2021.
- Remaining waste products, including mixed paper and cardboard, by no later than 30 June 2022.

While these announcements are major commitments from the Federal and State Governments on some waste streams, the implications for the viability of kerbside recycling are very significant. To appropriately implement this ban significant infrastructure and industry development is required, otherwise the material will either end up being stockpiled or landfilled.

At the time of writing the Federal Government was seeking investment priorities from each jurisdiction, with LGAT being invited to provide feedback on the State Government's proposed projects. It is expected that the funding announcements will be made at the next COAG meeting on the 13th March.

Budget Implications

Being undertaken within current resources, although waste matters currently constitute a significant workload.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Facilitating change;
- Building Local Government's reputation;
- Fostering collaboration; and
- Developing capacity and capability to deliver.

4.4 PLANNING

Contact Officer – Dion Lester

That members note the following report on the progress of the State Government's program of land use planning reform.

Resolved

Background

In recent months there has been delays with the next stages of Government's planning reform agenda, apart from councils completing and lodging their Local Provisions Schedules.

However, at the time of writing the Government was consulting on a draft Apartment Code for inclusion with the State Planning Provisions and consultation had commenced on the updated Major Projects legislation.

In addition, the release of the scoping paper for the Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) was reported to be imminent. It is anticipated that there will be a significant role for Local Government in the TPPs, not only in responding to their scope, but particularly during the drafting stage during the later months of the year.

On the 28th February the Government released the first report on data collected under the *Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019*.

This report can be found at:

https://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/561012/CBOS-First-report-on-short-stay-accommodation-Feb-2020.pdf

In summary the report indicated that there are 5487 individual properties listed on short stay accommodation platforms in Tasmania and that 3113 (56.7%) are reporting as not being a principal place of residence. Of these 1083 indicated that they did not need a permit, with many claiming existing use rights.

While LGAT welcomed the collection and release of this data, we are seeking further analysis of the data in future releases by the State Government to ensure it is accurate and reliable and to determine the extent to which short stay visitor accommodation is impacting on housing availability and affordability at the local level.

Budget Impact

Being undertaken within current resources.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Building Local Government's reputation;
- Fostering collaboration; and
- Developing capacity and capability to deliver.

4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

Contact Officer – Katrena Stephenson

That the Meeting note actions taken by LGAT with respect to online bullying and harassment.

Resolved

At the December General Meeting LGAT noted the following activity in relation to addressing online bullying and harassment:

- An op ed published in all three Tasmanian papers, replicated in LGAT's e-newsletter - <https://mailchi.mp/lgat.tas.gov.au/the-pulse-e-newsletter-october-752899>;
- Discussion with the Director of Local Government and Minister regarding collaborative responses. This included a round table discussion with the Minister held at the Mayors' workshop on 5 December;
- Initiation of a member survey focussed on online bullying and harassment to provide some inputs to the Roundtable. Key findings are available here: <http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=956>

- Extension of LGAT's Peer Advisor Program beyond the end of this year and re-promotion of the program to Elected Members (for more information see <http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=646&c=7991>)
- Expansion of the remit for upcoming social media training to cover both appropriate use and responding to misuse including hiring of videographer to convert materials to an online resource.
- Agreement to work with State Government on other tools and guidance and circulation of resources from the Office of E-Safety;
- Reminder to councils of LGAT's model communications and social media policy (available on the Extranet); and
- President's messaging focussed both on the need for leaders to challenge inappropriate behaviours but also that being on council is still very worthwhile.

Since that meeting:

- Training was delivered by KingThing in the South and North West.
- New Social Media resources have been placed on the LGAT extranet (each council is provided a login for the extranet for use by staff and elected Members, please contact LGAT if you need the information resent). Resources include:
 - Social Media, Local Government and Legislation
 - Social Media Overview, Statistics and Data
 - Using Social Media as an Effective Engagement Tool
 - Cyberbullying and trolls
 - How to respond to online negativity.
 - Links are also provided to other useful resources.
- The Elected Member weekend (29 Feb-1 March) has a session on resilience, mental health and bullying as well as health and safety legislation for councillors.

Budget Impact

Does not apply.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

Facilitating Change

Priority Area 2 Support the sector through the next stages of Local Government Reform

4.6 21ST CENTURY COUNCILS*

Contact Officer – Dion Lester

That Members note the progress on the 21st Century Councils Project.

Resolved

Background

At the March 2019 General meeting members endorsed the following methodology for progressing discussions on the future of the Tasmanian Local Government sector, known under the name of 21st Century Council Project:

1. Development of a summary paper covering the history of the work that has been done to date in relation to Local Government reform in the State and the context and drivers of discussions to date;
2. Compilation of a stakeholder interest/outcomes paper; and
3. A series of pilot projects to test change ideas that fit with the issues raised in consultation with the sector and issues emerging out of the Part 2 investigations.

Part 1 has been completed and the results were presented at the July General Meeting. A copy of the paper, *21st Century Councils – Structural Reform Discussion Paper*, can be found on the LGAT website under 2019 in Report and Submissions

Part 2 involves a stakeholder engagement process, consisting of engagement at an individual council level (by the “roundtable conversations”) and targeted one on one interviews with other key stakeholders (peak bodies typically).

The council roundtable conversations are complete, and a summary report can be found as an **Attachment 4.6** to this item.

The process involved General Managers guiding a conversation with their respective councillor groups. The focus of the conversation was around two key questions:

1. What outcomes do we need to achieve for the sector?
2. What reforms could or should happen to achieve those outcomes?

The feedback process yielded the following key themes:

Localised democracy

Community proximity to elected members and decision making is a core strength of Local Government (LG). LG’s role in emergency management, local employment and local knowledge serve communities well by building social cohesion, responsiveness, resilience and regional advocacy.

Inter-council collaboration

There is a strong desire to focus on effective collaboration and consistency of service levels and operating platforms/processes regionally, through seeking efficiencies of scope rather than scale. There is a need to improve the viability of council service delivery through shared services and resources.

Rebalancing obligations

A renewed relationship with the State Government focused on strategic outcomes, including the amelioration of “burden shifting” by securing funding sources for services handed down to LG.

Climate Change

Responding to and mitigating the impact of climate change dominated local issues of concern across LGAT members. Disaster management associated with changing climate is recognised as a major future cost to LG and without thorough planning and investment now will become unmanageable burden for the sector.

The second component, key stakeholder interviews, will be commencing in March, with Andrew Paul (ex-City of Clarence Council GM) to undertake the work on behalf of LGAT. A list of 23 key stakeholders has been developed for the following questions to be posed:

- What does recent history tell us about Local Government Sector reform?
- Are there any particular issues or concerns related to Local Government you feel strongly about?
- What strengths does Local Government need to build on?
- What weaknesses should Local Government address?
- What future outcomes should we aim for? How would we know we have achieved them?
- What would make for a stronger relationship between the people your organisation represents and Local Government?
- Is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anyone else you feel we should speak with?

The results from the stakeholder consultation will be analysed alongside the Part 1 work to allow the scoping of next steps and any pilot projects.

From this work, the Sector will report its own agenda to the community, to State Government and beyond about where it wants to take the Local Government cause.

Budget Impact

Parts 1 and 2 are being undertaken within current resources, however Part 3 would require dedicated further investment to ensure the pilot projects are designed and implemented effectively.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Facilitating change;
- Building Local Government's reputation;
- Fostering collaboration;
- Promoting financial sustainability; and
- Developing capacity and capability to deliver.

4.7 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Contact Officer – Georgia Palmer

That members note the report on emergency management issues.

Resolved

Bushfire

Australia has witnessed unprecedented bushfires this summer and the fire season is not yet over. Almost all states and territories have been impacted with over 18.6 million acres burnt, 5900 buildings destroyed, an estimated 1 billion animals killed and 34 people have died.

The Federal Government has established the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) and committed \$2 billion to assist in the reconstruction. Each impacted council has received \$1 million in untied funds to support their immediate recovery needs with significant additional funding likely through the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. At this stage there is little detail on how the \$2 billion will be spent.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is advocating strongly to the Federal Government to ensure the funding restores both essential public assets and community infrastructure. It is understood that as the reconstruction funding has not been fully allocated there may be opportunities for councils to advocate for funding through their local members.

The Prime Minister has indicated the Australian Government intends to pursue a number of reforms as a result of issues arising from the 2019 - 20 bushfires, including in relation to:

- A legal framework that would allow the Commonwealth to declare a national state of emergency, and take action, including the deployment of defence forces;
- The legal interface with the states and territories on responsibilities for preparedness for and response to natural disasters and emergencies of national scale; and
- An enhanced national accountability framework for natural disaster risk management, resilience and preparedness.

In addition, the Australian Government has established a Royal Commission into the summer bushfires which is required to report to government with recommendations by 31 August 2020.

Tasmania has also experienced a number of bushfires this season including the Fingal Complex Fires (Mangana and Mt Malcom) which burnt more than 20,000 hectares, the Pelham fire which burnt over 2000 hectares and most recently the Winkleigh fires in West Tamar. In Tasmania, four residential properties have been destroyed, multiple outbuildings and sheds and a significant amount of fencing. The agribusiness impacts are estimated to be in excess of \$675,000 in Break O’Day, \$52,000 in Central Highlands, and \$498,000 in Southern Midlands.

Recovery assistance to the community has been coordinated locally by councils with regional assistance.

Budget Impact

Being undertaken within current resources

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Facilitating change;
- Fostering collaboration; and
- Developing capacity and capability to deliver.

4.8 POLICY UPDATE

Contact Officer – Dion Lester

That Members note the policy update which provides a brief overview on a range of matters.

Resolved

Building Act 2016 and Expiry of Permits

In mid-2018, member councils raised an impending issue they were facing with a provision in the schedules of the *Building Act 2016*. This provision (Schedule 2, Part 3, Section 6)⁴ effectively forces the expiry of some older permits.

The intent behind this provision was to clear the building system of some of the older permits that had very long or unlimited expiries that had become stagnant and permit holders were not acting on. However, it would also affect the same permits where permit holders were still intending to complete the work or worse, where work had been completed but final documentation had not been obtained by the permit holder. There was great concern from council permit authorities across the state that this was an impending public relations storm with the potential for hundreds or even thousands of community members with lapsed permits mistakenly directing their frustrations at councils, who had nothing to do with the introduction and implementation of this provision.

⁴ See: <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2016-025#JS2@HS3@EN>

LGAT advocated to Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) to extend the expiry date from 31 December 2018 out to 30 July 2020. With this extended date fast approaching, LGAT surveyed councils over December and January to see how they were dealing with the issue. We found around 75% of councils were undertaking a very significant amount of work to check their records for outstanding older permits of this nature, prepare letters and individually notify permit holders, requiring a lot of time and resources to complete, none of which has yet been completed.

To assist councils, LGAT has advocated to CBOS to support their efforts in notifying the public by releasing some information and raising awareness. As a result of this, CBOS has prepared and published the following information, which councils can use in their communications to advise permit holders to review their situation and seek extensions to their permits if necessary:

<https://cbos.tas.gov.au/newsroom/news-items/building-permit-expiry-dates>

LGAT will continue to monitor the situation and assist councils where necessary.

337 Certificates

On the 4th March changes to the 337 Certificates (Schedule 6 of the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015*) came into force. The changes were made in response to a motion endorsed at LGATs July 2019 General Meeting and involved two rounds of consultation. The amendments included:

- Changes to the existing questions to bring the planning and development questions in line with recent changes to the Tasmanian Planning System; and
- The inclusion of new questions, and changes to existing questions, to bring the building and plumbing questions in line with the *Building Act 2016* and *Building Regulations 2016*. This included a new question relating to hazards, such as landslip, bushfire and flooding.

Unfortunately, the Local Government Division failed to provide councils with enough notice of the timeframe for formal commencement, which caused some concerns. This was compounded by some technical issues that prevented access to the updated Regulations on the Tasmanian Legislation website. LGAT worked closely with the Division to address the immediate issues and also the failure to close the loop with LGAT and councils prior to introducing the changes.

State of the State Address

Early March saw the new Premier's State of the State address⁵ to Parliament. In that speech there were a number of notable announcements for Local government. He announced the release of the new draft Major Projects Legislation, which seeks to provide an approvals pathway for projects that cross municipal boundaries and involve multiple acts and regulators

⁵ http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/state_of_the_the_state_address

or are of a significant scale or complexity. Major projects will be able to be referred into the process by councils, the proponent or the Minister for Planning and if they meet the criteria they can use this approvals pathway.

LGAT is currently consulting with the sector on the proposed changes.

In the area of “red tape reduction” the Premier announced that the Government will be introducing legislative timeframes for the permit process for energy and water, and sewerage services, and they will be better resourcing the land titles office so that titles can be released to the market more quickly.

Perhaps most notably, the Premier made a number of bold statements and set some ambitious targets in his role as Climate Change Minister. Please refer to the following item for further details on this aspect of the State of the State address.

Climate Change

After a horror summer of bushfires, the predictions of climate science have been looming large in the public sphere. The scale of the impact and public reaction has blindsided the Australian Government and left them struggling for a response that communities find commensurate to that impact or appropriately directed toward the known cause – a changing climate caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

After sufficient time to consider its response, the Morrison Government is currently choosing to emphasise adaptation action while continuing with its previous approach to mitigation action.

The response from the Tasmanian Liberal Government has involved the new Premier, Peter Gutwein, creating a Climate Change ministerial portfolio and taking this on himself. In addition, in the Premier’s State of the State address he made a number of bold statements and set some ambitious targets. In particular, the Premier noted the following:

- *“...our response to climate change can’t be limited to adaptation and risk management – we also need to mitigate the effects of climate change”*
- The Tasmanian Government will *“conduct a detailed analysis of the pathway our state would need to take and the impacts on industry and jobs to **achieve a target of zero net emissions prior to 2050.**”*
- Reiterated the current commitment to generating 100% of our needs from renewable energy by 2022 and are on track to meet that.
- Announced a new renewable energy generation target of 200 per cent of our energy consumption by 2040.
- That Tasmania’s *“net emissions profile is the envy of the nation and we are one of the lowest emitters in the world however there is more to be done.”*
- *“This Government will do its part in reducing our emissions by leading by example.”*

These are strong and clear statements backed by targets which are not just good environmental policy – there is a clear economic basis to them. The Premier is clearly positioning Tasmania to be a renewable energy powerhouse for the National Energy Market, anticipating the change in energy generation expected to occur in the following decades and priming Tasmania to benefit from it. This is a calculated alignment of the environment, energy and economic policy areas and finding a synergy in them.

LGAT will track changes in this policy area closely and look to put Local Government at the forefront of opportunities that develop from this

Development Standards Update

LGAT has been working closely with the Tasmanian chapter of the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australasia (IPWEA Tas) to produce, publish and maintain a suite of development standards documentation. These documents are intended to support councils primarily by providing a single, clear and harmonised set of development standards that represents a pragmatic best practice for development that is robust and defensible. The documents are also intended to support developers and designers in providing clarity and guidance on minimum standards upfront.

The status of the three development standards documents are as follows:

1. Tasmanian Standard Drawings – a review of the existing document has been completed and undergoing final sign off. Once finalised, the latest version will be published on LGAT’s website and distributed to councils for use.
2. Municipal Specifications – the IPWEA Tas management committee is conducting a final review of this new document before being published for the first time on the LGAT website.
3. Tasmanian Subdivision Guidelines – LGAT & IPWEA have sought tenders from consultants to complete this work and will shortly be engaging the preferred supplier. The work will involve a consultation workshop with Local Government development engineers to work through the document and harmonise as many of the variations in standards between councils as possible.

LGAT will continue to keep members updated on progress.

Weeds

The June 2019 General Meeting passed a motion that *“LGAT lobby the heads of the Tasmanian Government’s Departments and GBE’s with responsibilities for management of public lands or works on public lands to have new increased and sustained resourcing levels committed in government agency budgets to manage weeds on public land in coordination with efforts of others in local areas.”*

The 2018-19 State Budget included the creation of a new Weeds Action Fund (WAF) of \$5 million over five years commencing in 2018. The WAF became the vehicle for progressing the aims of the motion. A priority for WAF is “to ensure that there is strong, coordinated link between the different levels of government and the Tasmanian community in tackling serious weeds...”

Stage 1 of WAF offered small grants of \$1000 to \$5000 to organisations and Stage 2 will provide funding for major projects. LGAT recently attended a stakeholder meeting to discuss Stage 2 of the WAF that will roll out from 2020 to 2023. The focus of the meeting was on collaboration between stakeholders with a responsibility or direct interest in the management of weeds in Tasmania, and this included discussion around how stakeholder organisations can contribute directly to the implementation of the WAF.

Council engagement in the Stage 2 projects is seen as critical and councils will have opportunities to work directly with government agencies and other stakeholders. Biosecurity Tasmania is currently finalising the process to implement Stage 2.

Health and Wellbeing Project

The 6 monthly progress report for July - December 2019 has been presented to the Public Health Service (PHS), with a positive response. The 6 monthly report includes proposals on how to best support councils’ community health and wellbeing work in an ongoing and sustainable way. LGAT is currently working with PHS on how to progress the proposals.

Collaboration with PHS continues to be very constructive, for example, PHS officers participated in the December 2019 council officer forums. They described the important role that councils play in implementing government health policy and discussed how councils’ work can be better supported.

The Central Coast Pit Stop Project and regional data workshops are highlights for the Project so far this year. The Project supported Central Coast Council and Rotary Ulverstone to add a Pit Stop event to the annual Ulverstone Festival in the Park. People were encouraged to visit a variety of health services for check-ups and information, with 367 people receiving information. LGAT involvement in preparing for the event and being present on the day were acknowledged and appreciated. An intended outcome for the Project is that other councils and community groups will take up the concept.

Professional development on data analysis and use has been identified as a priority by community development, engagement, and health and wellbeing officers. Workshops facilitated by the Project provided council officers with training by AURIN and Profile Id. Both of these nationally respected data services delivered presentations for the Tasmanian context.

Budget Impact

Being undertaken within current resources.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Facilitating change;
- Fostering collaboration;
- Promoting financial sustainability; and
- Developing capacity and capability to deliver.

4.9 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT SURVEY* Contact Officer – Katelyn Cragg

That the Meeting note the outcomes of the LGAT Performance Improvement Survey.

Resolved

Background

LGAT uses an annual Performance and Improvement Survey to assess how well we are achieving for our members and how we can continually improve our service. The latest survey was conducted from December 2019 through to mid February 2020.

The 2018 survey was sent to all councillors and council staff and results were perhaps somewhat skewed by a higher proportion of non-executive staff responding with limited engagement with LGAT in the roles they were undertaking. This year the survey was sent to all Mayors, Councillors and General Managers, council executive team members and specialist technical officers/managers. This resulted in a greater level of input from elected members compared to council staff but in general the number of respondents was low at 71 (53 elected members – 20% of all elected members). This was despite direct emails, promotion in meeting papers, via the monthly report and in Pulse.

The report is included as **Attachment to Item 4.9**, with the key findings including:

- Respondents rated informing the Local Government legislation review; the waste feasibility study; waste advocacy and voter turnout as the most successful recent achievements.
- 80% of respondents rated LGAT's policy research/development as good or excellent (64% last survey);
- 72% rated LGAT's communications as good or excellent (68% last survey);
- 69% rated LGAT's advocacy as good or excellent (67% last survey);
- 74% rated LGAT's engagement as good or excellent (55% last survey);
- 72% rated LGAT's tools and training as good or excellent (52% last survey);

- 68% rated LGAT’s projects and procurement as good or excellent (45% last survey);
- New councillor resources were the most highly rated tools;
- More training was a common desire; and
- Most respondents described LGAT positively (e.g. professional, hardworking, proactive, helpful, and a valuable resource).

The next Performance Improvement Survey will be conducted in the first quarter of 2021 as an input into LGAT’s next strategic plan but Members should continue to raise any ideas or concerns with the CEO or President at any time.

Budget Implications

Does not apply.

4.10 COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS UPDATE

Contact Officer – Kate Hiscock

That Members note the update which provides an overview on LGAT’s communications and professional development activities.

Resolved

It was noted that key events, including the LGAT Annual Conference, have had to be cancelled in response to public health directions and ongoing uncertainty as a consequence of the COVID 19 Pandemic.

COMMUNICATIONS

Pulse

The first edition of the Pulse newsletter for 2020 was issued in February (click [here](#) to read) and the March edition is due to go out in early March. The Pulse is distributed to all Members and other subscribed stakeholders and provides a monthly update of LGAT activities. We frequently receive request from organizations to include information in the Pulse. We apply a strict guideline that content must be of benefit to our Members. You can subscribe to the Pulse [here](#). Please check you inbox to ensure you are receiving the Pulse and that it is not going to spam or junk mail which is sometimes occurs with group mailouts.

LGTas

The next edition of LGTas will be circulated in late April. This edition will focus on Health and Wellbeing and the many ways Tasmanian Councils are supporting and promoting health and wellbeing in their communities.

Overview of Activities

Proactive communications activities since the last General Meeting in addition to media queries include:

- *The Pulse* Newsletter published December, February
- Regular Twitter and linked in posts. Linked In followers have grown to 138, Twitter 939 Followers.
- Four Media Releases, multiple media queries.

EVENTS and TRAINING

The key events and training activities since last meeting include:

LGAT Stakeholder Event

The LGAT Stakeholder event is held annually as an engagement opportunity with key stakeholders and to thank sponsors. Held as a casual event in the LGAT garden for several years, this year the LGAT Stakeholder event was refreshed as a more formal networking event at Gold Bar in Hobart. The event was held between 4-6pm on the 19th February and was opened by GMC Deputy Chair Mayor Ben Shaw with around 50 attendees.

Elected Members Professional Development Weekend

The LGAT Elected Members Weekend is conducted early each year and was held 29 Feb to 1 March in Launceston. The two-day program provided interactive sessions on issues key to our sector and critical to the roles and responsibilities of being an elected member. It also provided an opportunity for our elected members to network and to meet key stakeholders such as the Acting Director of Local Government. The weekend was very well attended with 51 attendees.

Topics in this year's program included:

- Resilience, Mental Health and Bullying – OzHelp;
- Understanding the Financial Reports of Local Governments – CPA Australia;
- Conflict of Interest Session – Tasmanian Integrity Commission;
- Health and Safety Legislation for Councillors - Edge Legal;
- Local Government Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet – Update; and
- LGAT Policy Update and Question Time – LGAT.

International Women's Day Joint Luncheon and 2020 Tasplan International Women's Day Awards for Excellence

Following a successful, sell out event in 2019, LGAT again jointly hosted an International Women's Day Luncheon with the Tasmanian State Government and TasCOSS on 6 March at Blundstone Arena, Hobart. The event featured our International Women's Day Awards for Excellence and Guest Speaker CEO of AFL Tasmanian Trisha Squires, sponsored by UTAS. The event again sold out, with over 250 people attending.

The Tasplan International Women's Day Awards for Excellence are designed to celebrate and encourage excellence for women in Local, State Government and the Community Sectors. Two awards are given in each sector, focusing on inspirational and aspiring leadership. The winners of this year's awards for Local Government are:

Inspirational Leader – Elected Member: Heather Chong, Deputy Mayor, City of Clarence
Inspirational Leader Council Officer: Tracey Bradley, Director of Community Services, Circular Head/Waratah Wynyard Councils

Other Events:

- Pit Stop Central Coast, 23 February 2020
- Professional development workshop; data availability and analysis, Hobart & Devonport (3 & 4 March)
- LGAT Procurement Workshops (16 & 17 March)

Upcoming Training and Development opportunities include:

- Mayor's Professional Development Day, 26 March, Devonport
- Emergency Management Forum, 28 April, Campbell Town

LGAT Annual Conference

The 108th LGAT Annual Conference will be held at Wrest Point Convention Centre on July 22-24 2020. The 2020 Annual Conference theme is "Inspire, Innovate, Include". The sponsorship prospectus has been released and we are happy to advise that MAV Insurance is returning as our Platinum Partner.

Our plenary program is nearing finalisation, featuring a range of interesting topics including:

- Kirsha Walsh of MONA speaking about her outstanding 24 Carrot Garden community project;
- Mayor Dale Williams of New Zealand on innovative ways to get young people into work and their role in Local Government;
- Bullyologist Jessica Hickman speaking on breaking the silence on bullying; and
- David O'Loughlin on the national Local Government agenda.

After the success of last year's program, we are again hosting some local policy issue focused workshops, symposium sessions featuring partner or supporting organizations as well as presentations on successful local member projects and programs.

The looming threat of COVID-19 should not go unmentioned. LGAT is currently undertaking a risk analysis and contingency planning around the possibility that our Conference may be significantly impacted.

Budget Impact

Being undertaken within current resources

Noting that event cancellation as a result of COVID-19 impacts would likely result in financial loss.

Current Policy

Strategic Plan:

- Building Local Government’s reputation;
- Fostering collaboration; and
- Developing capacity and capability to deliver.

4.11 ANNUAL PLAN*

Contact officer – Dion Lester

That members note the report.	Resolved
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A report against the progress of the LGAT Annual Plan is at **Attachment 4.11.**

5. OTHER BUSINESS & CLOSE

Members noted recent correspondence from the ASU seeking support in the advocacy campaign for Federal Wage subsidies for council employees.

While recognising the key role of Local Government in providing essential services and in leading recovery, and acknowledging the hard work of staff, LGAT Members determined they needed more information and more opportunity to discuss wage subsidies and other mechanisms at a council level prior to forming a sector view. It was agreed that without having been able to have the conversations prior to today's LGAT General Meeting, that council representatives could not vote on the matter today.

There being no further business the President declared the Meeting closed.

Items with Weighted Voting

COUNCIL	Vote Weight	Motion - as Amended																				Dorset Amendment		Kingborough Amendment				
		Item 2.3				Item 2.4				Item 2.5 (6)				Item 2.5 (5)				Item 2.5 (5)				Item 2.5 (!)						
		YES =1	NO=1	Y	NO	YES =1	Y	NO	YES =1	Y	NO	YES =1	NO=1	Y	NO	YES =1	Y	NO	Y	NO	Y	NO	Y	NO	Y	NO		
Break O'Day Council	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Brighton Council	2	0	1	2	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
Burnie City Council	2	0	1	2	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
Central Coast Council	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3
Central Highlands Council	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Circular Head Council	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Clarence City Council	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4
Derwent Valley Council	2	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
Devonport City Council	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3
Dorset Council	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Flinders Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
George Town Council	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Glamorgan/Spring Bay Council	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Glenorchy City Council	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4
Hobart City Council	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4
Huon Valley Council	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Kentish Council	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Kingborough Council	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3
King Island Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latrobe Council	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Launceston City Council	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meander Valley Council	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Northern Midlands Council	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Sorell Council	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Southern Midlands Council	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Tasman Council	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Waratah - Wynyard Council	2	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
West Coast Council	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
West Tamar Council	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	1	3
TOTAL	58	YES 8	NO 44	YES 33	NO 19	YES 27	NO 25	YES 43	NO 9	YES 18	NO 34	YES 34	NO 14															

Yellow: Apology/Absent

General Meeting 27 March 2020

Item No		
2	Items for Decision	
2.1	Charitable Rates	Refer AGM Agenda Annual Plan
2.2	Headworks	Refer Item 2.2
2.3	Timing of Local Government Elections	Motion Lost No Further Action
2.4	Newstart	Refer Follow up of Motions
2.5	COVID Relief	No Further Action
3	Items for Discussion	
3.1	Professional Development Elected Members	Deferred and will be listed at a future meeting
4	Items for Noting	
4.1	Local Government Act Review	Refer Item 3.1
4.2	Coastal Hazards	Ongoing
4.3	Waste	Refer Item 3.1
4.4	Planning	Refer Item 3.2
4.5	Social Media	Refer Item 3.14
4.6	21st Century Councils	Ongoing
4.7	Emergency Management	Refer Item 3.8
4.8	Policy Update	No Further Action
4.9	Performance and Improvement Survey	No Further Action
4.10	Communications and Events Update	Refer Item 3.14
4.11	Annual Plan	Refer AGM Agenda

Follow Up of Motions Report

Report to the General Meeting

This report details motions where LGAT is still pursuing an outcome.

Local Government Legislation	
<p>Rating</p> <p>That LGAT establish a working group and seek legal advice if necessary, to develop a proposed amendment to section 87 of the Local Government Act, and specifically in regard to the definition charitable purpose, with a view to providing certainty and social equity in the application of rating exemptions.</p> <p>That LGAT seek a firm commitment from the State Government to commence a review of the rating exemption provisions in the Local Government Act, with amendment to proceed as soon as practicable and ahead of the broader legislative review timeframes</p>	<p>Passed: March 2019</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has established a Steering Committee and sought legal advice on amendments to the Local Government Act. Further engagement with the Government and other stakeholders was put on hold at the commencement of COVID-19.</p> <p>The Steering Committee have determined that given the changed context, this matter would best be dealt with as part of the review of Local Government legislation at this time.</p>
Environment	
<p>Climate Change</p> <p>That the LGAT call upon the Federal and Tasmanian State Governments and Parliaments urging them to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Acknowledge the urgency created by climate change that requires immediate and collaborative action across all tiers of government;Acknowledge that the world climate crisis is an issue of social and environmental injustice and, to a great extent, the burden of the frontline impacts of climate change fall on low income communities vulnerable groups and future generations; andFacilitate emergency action to address the climate crisis, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet or exceed targets in the Paris Agreement.	<p>Passed: July 2019</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has written to the Premier and the Prime Minister, urging them to acknowledge and take action to address climate change in accordance with this motion. We are awaiting a response.</p> <p>However, subsequent to LGAT's letters, the new Premier has created a ministerial portfolio for climate change and taken it on personally. The Premier's State of the State report¹ on 3 March 2020 made very strong statements addressing climate change and they were consistent with most aspects of this motion.</p>

¹ See: http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/releases/state_of_the_state

<p>Waste and Resource Recovery</p> <p>That Members endorse the proposal to establish a LGAT led Waste Action Plan Reference Group to lead the sectors input into the State Waste Action Plan</p>	<p>Passed: December 2019</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has received nominations from the sector for the Reference Group. At this point no further work has been required, as the State Government has not substantially progressed the next stages of the draft WAP.</p> <p>This motion will be removed following the July General Meeting.</p>
<p>Weed Management</p> <p>That LGAT lobby the heads of the Tasmanian Government’s Departments and GBEs with responsibilities for management of public lands or works on public lands to have new increased and sustained resourcing levels committed in government agency budgets to manage weeds on public land in coordination with the efforts of others in local areas.</p>	<p>Passed: July 2019</p> <p>Notes: Stage 2 of the Weeds Action Fund (WAF), which will roll out from 2020 to 2023, has “shared responsibility” as a key principle. The focus of the WAF is on collaboration between stakeholders with a responsibility or direct interest in the management of weeds in Tasmania.</p> <p>The tender process for a preferred service provider to administer the allocation of funds for the WAF closed on 21 April and DPIPW is currently finalising the process.</p> <p>In addition, Glamorgan Spring Bay, Break O’Day, Southern Midlands, Tasman and Sorell Councils have all signed agreements for funding under the drought and weeds program. This will allow them to subsidise the salary of a council Weeds Inspector and to support on-ground, targeted weed control activities.</p> <p>The funding will also allow councils to undertake further weeds planning, surveillance, training and awareness activities to reduce the risk of weeds spreading.</p> <p>This motion will be removed following the July General Meeting.</p>

Planning and Building	
<p>Building Act</p> <p>That LGAT request that the State Government provide the necessary resources and undertake an urgent review of the Building Act 2016 to address the shortcomings being experienced by Local Government in relation to the operation of this Act.</p>	<p>Passed: July 2018</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has raised this issue with the Director of Building Control and while a root and branch review was not supported, he did accept there was an opportunity for continual improvement to the Building Act. Prior to COVID-19, LGAT had commenced planning for regular meetings with permit authorities, which will be used both as a direct engagement forum to inform LGAT’s advocacy for changes to the Building Act and also for permit authorities to accrue CPD points. This work will now re-commence, with the first forums expected to be rolled out prior to the end of this year.</p>
<p>337 Certificates</p> <p>That the Local Government Association of Tasmania lobby the Tasmanian Government for:</p> <p>1. Urgent review of the 337 certificate form under Schedule 5 of the Local Government (General) Regulations 2015 to address the following omissions from current regulatory regimes that impact the subject lands:</p> <p>a) Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993: Codes (such as landslip); Specific Area Plans; Local provisions; applications for a new planning scheme - including the Tasmanian Planning Scheme; or applications for amendments to local provisions under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.</p> <p>b) Building Act 2016: Submitted form 80’s for low risk building work; Whether any natural hazard considerations affect the lands; Question 31 (a) add a new section (iii) asking about onsite waste waters systems approved prior to the Plumbing Regulations 1994 Questions 38-40 be revised to ask whether notifiable building work has been completed and then to provide details regardless of the answer; and</p>	<p>Passed: July 2019</p> <p>Notes: Throughout late 2019 LGAT worked with the Government on part 1 (337s) of the motion. An amendment to the Regulations came into effect on the 4 March. LGAT has surveyed councils to see how the amended list of questions is working for them and is following up on the responses received.</p> <p>In relation to part 2 of the motion (the <i>Property Agents and Land Transactions Act 2016</i>), LGAT has written to the Minister for Building and Construction. The Minister responded by noting that vendor disclosure was considered in 2016 with no consensus among stakeholders but committed to continuing discussions to inform any potential future decisions around reforms.</p> <p>This motion will be removed following the July General Meeting.</p>

<p>2. Revisions to the Property Agents and Land Transactions Act 2016 to consider:</p> <p>a) Requiring a 337 certificate prior to listing of a property and making it available as part of the sale process; and</p> <p>b) Seeking full disclosure for properties as part of the listing process rather than the current process</p>	
Roads and Infrastructure	
<p>Heavy Vehicle Road Tax</p> <p>That Member Councils of LGAT recommend that the State Government provides an immediate commitment to reinstatement of the equitable distribution of the total heavy motor vehicle road tax collected, to the percentage distribution at the time of inception of the scheme in 1996/1997.</p>	<p>Passed: July 2019</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has written to the Minister for Transport seeking their response to this motion and intentions regarding the Heavy Vehicle Road Tax. The Minister responded in the negative, deflecting appropriate attribution among road management authorities by referring to other streams of funding. However, the argument hinges on an economic principle and matters of good governance, not simple funding amounts. LGAT intends to escalate this issue to the Treasurer in the coming weeks, where economic arguments may be better received.</p>
<p>Indexation of Heavy Vehicle Road Tax</p> <p>Member Councils of LGAT recommend that the State Government make to all Local Councils a one off additional annual payment allocation of the heavy motor vehicle road tax distribution as compensation for 24 years of no indexation of the funding allocation.</p>	<p>Passed: July 2019</p> <p>Notes: As above.</p>

Emergency Management

Fire Services Levy

1. Advocate on behalf of all Councils the deep concern at the level of the Fire Service Contribution that councils are expected to collect from ratepayers each year on behalf of the State Fire Commission; and
2. Seek justification for the excessive level of financial burden that has been imposed over the last five years.

Passed: July 2018

Notes: The Fire Services Act is currently under review. The Act is the key piece of legislation which dictates the Fire Service Contribution and how increases to the contribution are decided. LGAT provided a submission to the issues paper as part of the review and advocated concern and the need for more transparency and justification in relation to increase to the contribution. LGAT also met with Mike Blake as part of his consultation on the Bill in which we discussed the LGAT submission and the issues raised as part of this motion. It is understood that a draft discussion paper is with the steering committee for final comment. Once finalised it will go out for public consultation for 3 months.

Local Government Business and Finance

Social Policy

Growing Health Crisis

- A. Council requests the State Government to:
1. Acknowledge that Tasmania is facing a growing health crisis caused by chronic and preventable disease.
 2. Acknowledge that one of the statutory functions of councils is to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community.
 3. Recognise that a continued costly focus on hospitals and traditional medical treatment cannot improve community health and health outcomes in the same way that a strategic focus on healthy behaviours and physical activity can.
 4. Create adequate funding mechanisms through new and existing budget allocations for Local Government - to allow for the adequate provision of sportsgrounds, playgrounds, outdoor walking, cycling and jogging trails and other infrastructure that will increase the exercise and activity options for all Tasmanians, with a key focus on children.
 5. Facilitate and fund appropriate public health awareness campaigns focused on the need to increase the uptake of healthy exercise behaviours by the wider Tasmanian community.
- B. That Council requests LGAT support recommendations 1-5 above and advocate to the State Government on behalf of the Local Government sector accordingly.

Passed: December 2019

Notes: The Local Government Community Health and Wellbeing Project is focussed on supporting councils to improve community health and wellbeing outcomes.

LGAT has been discussing the motion and the issues raised with the Department of Communities. Specific actions have been delayed by the Department's significant engagement in planning immediate and longer recovery from COVID-19. The Department noted that the context has significantly changed in recent months. For example, there has been a \$200M Local Government Loans Program available for councils to support infrastructure projects, including sport and recreation facilities. While the Department's immediate focus is around return to play and supporting sport organisations and facility owners/operators to put in place appropriate mechanisms to respond to and recovery from COVID-19, LGAT will continue discussing how both levels of government can strategically address the health crisis.

<p><i>Women's Shelter</i></p> <p>That LGAT advocate for the State Government to investigate the need for a Women's Shelter/s to be located in and to service regional Tasmania and other rural areas, to service the population across the greater part of rural Tasmania.</p>	<p>Passed: December 2019</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has written to the Minister and we are awaiting a response. The letter notes the increased urgency for action and the positive context for action created by the government's interest in addressing family and domestic violence and recent announcements of significant spending on social and affordable housing.</p>
<p><i>Public Spaces By-Laws</i></p> <p>That Tasmanian Councils consider adopting the provisions in the City of Hobart Public Spaces By-Law so that a person is not guilty of an offence in relation to camping in public spaces if at the time they are homeless</p>	<p>Passed: December 2019</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has written to all GMs encouraging their councils to consider the matter. A summary of the case that was provided with the motion and the work of the City of Hobart are included in the email.</p> <p>This motion will be removed following the July General Meeting.</p>
<p>Other matters</p>	
<p><i>Government Services Decentralisation</i></p> <p>Member Councils of LGAT recommend that the State Government provides a strategic commitment and resources funding program for the implementation of a state and federal government services decentralisation action plan to leverage and ensure the dispersal of employment opportunities across the state.</p>	<p>Passed: July 2018</p> <p>Notes: In its 2018 election platform, the Tasmanian Government made some statements and commitments of relevance to this motion. LGAT is reaching out to State Government partners to determine what actions have been taken to date regarding these and how they might contribute to the Tasmanian Government implementing and delivering a decentralisation/regionalisation action plan.</p> <p>In the post-COVID-19 environment of economic recovery, LGAT intends to advocate directly to the Minister's for Strategic and State Growth for support for this motion.</p>

<p><i>Tourism Signage</i></p> <p>That LGAT seek that the State Government provides a strategic commitment of a 4 year resources funding program for the implementation of international (Non English) visitor interpretive signage to ensure the dispersal of the increased international tourism economic benefits across the state.</p>	<p>Passed: July 2018</p> <p>Notes: LGAT has written to Tourism Tasmania and the Department of State Growth (DSG) and have received a response from Tourism Tasmania. Tourism Tasmania CEO provided a detailed and constructive response that noted that while he considered an interpretive signage program would not achieve improved regional tourism economic activity, Tourism Tasmania is motivated and has programs and measurable targets to increase visitation outside Hobart and the gateway cities into regional Tasmania.</p> <p>We are awaiting a response from DSG.</p>
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3 December 2019

Mayor Christina Holmdahl
President
Local Government Association of Tasmania
362 Macquarie Street
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Mayor Holmdahl,

I write in relation to the issue of TasWater headworks charges and request the support of the Local Government Association of Tasmania in lobbying for a review of the current 'headworks holiday'.

The Tasmanian Government imposed a 'headworks holiday' for a period of two years with regards to TasWater with the intent that it was to assist development and developers. This 'holiday' was then extended indefinitely.

It is the view of the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority that the lack of a headworks system is stifling development in critical growth areas (including those specifically identified as key growth sites in the Southern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy) in Greater Hobart.

The current system means that there can be an untenable 'first mover' cost, whereby the costs of the necessary sewer and water infrastructure to develop an area are too high for the first mover where there are multiple land owners in an area, which there generally are. All subsequent developers would effectively be subsidised by the 'first mover'.

TasWater demands that the infrastructure be suitable to service the area and will not fund the difference to then recoup it later from subsequent developers.

Brighton, for example, has a key growth precinct that has been sitting undeveloped for many years as no-one can fund the cost of the sewer pump station for the area alone. Getting the 20 or so land owners to co-fund is equally impossible.

Most other states have a system for headworks as Tasmania used to. The methodology is robust and transparent, and provides for equitable outcomes. Importantly, it also ensures that the cost of basic infrastructure is not a handbrake on orderly development and growth planning.

Given the above, the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority seeks the support of the Local Government Association of Tasmania to canvas the views of its membership in order to determine whether this issue is statewide and in the case that it does affect the majority of councils, the Local Government Association of Tasmania lobby the State Government to review the current arrangements.

Yours sincerely



Mayor Bec Enders

CHAIR

SOUTHERN TASMANIAN COUNCILS AUTHORITY

18 December 2019

Mayor Bec Enders
Chair
Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority

Dear Mayor Enders

TasWater Headworks Charges

Thank you for your letter dated 3 December seeking the Local Government Association of Tasmania support in lobbying for a review of the current 'headworks holiday' provided by TasWater. I am responding on behalf of the LGAT President, Mayor Christina Holmdahl.

The State Government initially introduced a 'headworks holiday' in late 2014 for a 2-year period. At the completion of this period the TasWater Board determined that it would continue the headworks holiday, and as you note in your letter it remains today.

On receipt of your correspondence LGAT contacted TasWater to clarify their policy position and it was indicated that it is currently under review as part of the development of their Pricing and Service Plan 4 (PSP4) submission, due on 30th June 2020.

TasWater have further indicated that as part of their preparation of their PSP4 they have developed a specific options paper on developer charges. To inform this options paper, TasWater convened three forums to understand perceptions around their current developer charges approach and role in economic development, through November 2018 to February 2019 in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport, for key stakeholders from Local Government, State Government, the development industry and associated professionals. Participants in each of the locations expressed a strong desire for TasWater to reconsider their approach to developer charges.

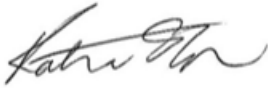
TasWater will be consulting on the options paper in early 2020. This engagement will include councils and we have informed TasWater of the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority concerns with the current headworks holiday.

Should you wish LGAT to advocate for the ceasing of the headworks holiday then it will need to be raised as a motion at our March General Meeting for broader sector

endorsement. I appreciate that the timing of this meeting is not ideal given the likely timing of the consultation on the options paper on developer charges (January to February). However, we understand TasWater recognises this is an important issue for councils and is committed to meaningful engagement.

I trust this satisfies your concerns and please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katrena Stephenson', written in a cursive style.

Dr Katrena Stephenson
Chief Executive Officer

Where LG sector view varied from reform direction		
Reform Direction	Sector View	Final Decision of Government
5. Reform eligibility for the General Manager's Roll	<p>Generally supported although a number of councils felt that permanent residents should also be allowed to vote, reflecting our growing migrant population.</p> <p>One Council suggested that inclusion on the House of Assembly electoral roll be an additional criterion for inclusion on the General Manager's Roll.</p> <p>One Council felt the General Manager's Roll should be removed entirely.</p> <p>At the July 2015 General meeting the following motion was carried: <i>That the LGAT urge the State Government to support the transfer of the administration of the General Manager's Roll to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. Further members also agreed, via motion, That the Local Government Association of Tasmania urge the State Government to review the eligibility for inclusion on the General Manager's Roll by reviewing the definition of occupier to better catch all citizens inclusive of refugees and permanent residents living in local government area.</i></p>	<p>Clarified as</p> <p>The following criteria will apply to the General Manager's Roll:</p> <p>Criteria 1 – A person must be an Australian citizen to be eligible to be enrolled to vote in local government elections.</p> <p>Criteria 2 – Individuals who are Australian citizens and own or occupy property in a municipal area where they are not residents should be eligible to enrol to vote in that area.</p> <p>Criteria 3 – A person is eligible for enrol to vote if they are the sole nominated representative of a business operating from a property in the municipal area, provided that person is an Australian citizen and is not already on the Roll in that municipal area under any other entitlement.</p> <p>No changes are proposed with regard to eligibility to vote based on enrolment on the House of Assembly roll.</p>
12. Introduce a pre-nomination training package	<p>This was supported by most councils although a few raised concerns that it might prove a barrier or obstruction if not accessible in multiple formats.</p> <p>Suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That training be optional or only be required for candidates not already on Council; • That training be simple, interactive, and accessible via multiple platforms; and • That training be used to support, rather than replace, regional face-to-face sessions. <p>One Council submitted the continued availability of induction and training resources to be sufficient and did not support this reform. Another Council suggested a standard code of conduct be developed for candidates.</p>	<p>Clarified as</p> <p>Potential electoral candidates will be required to complete a training package in order to nominate as a candidate. The training packages would be completed in a simple online format and will provide information about the roles and responsibilities of councillors, rather than testing a potential candidate's knowledge.</p>

<p>13. Introduce a candidate nomination fee</p>	<p>There was no clear position from the sector on this proposal. Some councils support this reform in order to deter candidates who are not serious, whilst others do not – labelling it as an anti-democratic, stumbling block which limits the socioeconomically disadvantaged.</p> <p>One Council noted that the suggested nomination fee is potentially not high enough to achieve the desired outcome. Another Council suggested that the scale of fees should be based on the level of allowances relative to the position.</p> <p>There was a greater level of support for a Mayoral candidate fee.</p>	<p>This proposal will not proceed. A candidate fee will not be introduced.</p>
<p>17. All councils will develop and adopt a community engagement strategy</p>	<p>While most written submissions to LGAT supported this proposal, there was a strong opposition expressed in face to face forums. Much of this may be related to the lack of underlying detail and a concern that this was an overly prescriptive move, especially when most councils already have community engagement strategies.</p> <p>Councils generally agreed that more flexibility around engagement processes is needed.</p> <p>If it does proceed it is imperative that engagement requirements are not prescribed in an overly detailed way, thus creating more administration, delays, and red-tape. The strategy should reflect the circumstances and expectations of individual councils who themselves decide what will/won't be engaged on.</p> <p>Some councils view this as a step too far and would prefer that the Act set minimum requirements for consultation and information, so that these are clear and consistent for all councils. Councils can then meet those requirements and still be flexible in their consultation approach beyond the minimum standards.</p> <p>It was also raised that there is a risk, particularly for small councils, of the requirements creating an unsustainable administrative burden not aligned with the services the community expect.</p> <p>A formal requirement to renew after each election was considered overreach.</p>	<p>Clarified as</p> <p>Councils will develop a Community Engagement Strategy after each election, in collaboration with their communities. The Community Engagement Strategy will inform how councils will engage, involve, consult and inform their communities on plans, projects and policies. Councils will be required to follow their Community Engagement Strategy when engaging communities on their Strategic Plan, in determining their service delivery priorities and when setting their budget (including rating decisions).</p> <p><i>Direct to gov council written submissions</i></p> <p><i>14 for</i></p> <p><i>4 against</i></p> <p><i>2 undecided</i></p>

<p>19. Remove requirements for public meetings and elector polls</p>	<p>Supported - One Council noted that public meetings and elector polls could be addressed within the adopted community engagement strategy.</p> <p>The retention of community initiated public meetings is supported by a small number of councils but only on the basis that the threshold number of electors are increased.</p> <p>It was suggested by one Council that elector polls only be capable of being held in conjunction with an election and LGAT feels, based on anecdotal evidence, that there would be support for that.</p>	<p>Not agreed by Gov but some amendment</p> <p>In recognition of strong community views about this Reform Direction, community-initiated elector polls and public meetings will be retained in the new Act. However, the threshold to trigger an elector poll will be increased to 20% of electors (currently the threshold is 10%). It will also be a condition that any elector polls or public meetings must relate to an issue over which local government has decision making authority. Councils will retain the power to initiate elector polls and a new power will be provided for the Minister to initiate a state-wide elector poll on a particular issue if required.</p>
<p>20. Legislate the eight good governance principles</p>	<p>Mostly supported by the sector although in general it was felt by LGAT Members that it would be sufficient to maintain these principles as guidelines due to their subjectivity and likely restrictiveness. The 'consensus oriented' principle was particularly problematic for one Council, being seen to be contrary to good governance. In all, the Act should establish expectations of a culture of governments rather than be overly prescriptive in approach.</p>	<p>No real change</p> <p>The principles from the Local Government Good Governance Guide will be legislated and linked to the behaviours in the Code of Conduct.</p> <p><i>11 councils supported</i></p> <p><i>4 supported with caveats</i></p> <p><i>5 against</i></p>
<p>21. Set high-level financial management principles that encourage efficiency and value for money in council service delivery</p>	<p>Council largely felt hamstrung in commenting on this proposal because of the lack of detail. While not strongly opposing, it was suggested that additional policy tools, such as guidelines, would be sufficient. It was hard to elicit what the major benefit over s28 (1) to (4) would be.</p> <p>Even those cautiously supportive felt the principles identified might be too narrow and did not capture the need for alignment of strategic planning documents.</p> <p>One suggestion arising from face to face discussions was that a practical and useful action would be to review the various accounting methodologies being used by councils and develop standardised reporting. This would</p>	<p>No real change</p> <p>High-level financial management principles will be established to provide a clear expectation for councils when developing their strategic plans and budgets that focus upon transparency, accountability and sound financial management.</p>

	<p>address some of the complexities such as volume/length of reporting driven by disclosures currently required in the Local Government Act and International Accounting standards, which are not necessarily relevant to Council operation.</p>	
<p>22. Establish core capability requirements for elected members</p>	<p>There was no consensus on this matter and particularly during workshops this was described as an overly prescriptive direction.</p> <p>It was noted by some that because Local Government is no different to State and Federal Governments in that the elected members are democratically elected, at most this should take the form of guidelines.</p> <p>Others suggested that training extend beyond Planning and Local Government to include topics directly relevant to the role of an elected member (e.g. meeting procedure training).</p> <p>One Council raised concern around the term 'core capability' as it implies there may be a pass or fail scenario for elected members. This Council therefore suggested it be changed to 'professional development'.</p> <p>It was uncertain how weight would be given to experience both on and off Council.</p> <p>Noting that training needs to be delivered in Plain English and accessible via multiple platforms, questions were raised as to how it would be implemented and how it would be affordable and accessible relative to the Councillors role and allowances.</p>	<p>Shifted to</p> <p>Core competency requirements for elected members will be outlined with general managers needing to develop and deliver an induction plan for elected members following each council election. It will also be a requirement for councillors to complete training about their role as a Planning Authority.</p> <p><i>In written submissions</i></p> <p><i>11 councils supported</i></p> <p><i>5 neutral</i></p> <p><i>1 against</i></p>
<p>23. Require councils to publicly report the core capability training that each elected member has completed annually</p>	<p>This was not strongly supported although there was less concern about broader reporting on training participation. One reason given by councils for not supporting this reform is the different level of training required by each elected member, according to their skills, background and experience (i.e. yearly reports will not provide a complete picture of capability and/or existing qualifications, thus creating an unnecessary compliance burden). Others, however, see merit in reporting core capability training and in extending this reform to all Councillor professional development.</p>	<p>Shifted to</p> <p>Reporting of training completed by elected members will not be required to be reported publicly, rather general managers will be required to develop induction plans for elected members, with meeting procedures training to be completed prior to the first meeting.</p>

<p>24. Establish principles for all Council staff that set minimum standards of behaviour</p>	<p>Not supported without further detail.</p> <p>Most councils feel that it is not necessary to include these principles within legislation as Local Government staff are employed and managed under an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and all councils already have workplace policies to manage behaviour.</p> <p>It is suggested that overly prescriptive legislation often causes more problems than it solves and that setting minimum standards would disempower the relationship between a council's General Manager and staff.</p> <p>Some Members feel that a level of prescription is appropriate and that there is merit in enhanced consistency.</p> <p>How these principles are applied to engagement with Council employee groups and/or contracts under commonwealth approved enterprise agreements requires clarification.</p>	<p>Clarified as</p> <p>Local government employment principles will be set, aligning with the principles applying to employees under the Tasmanian State Service Act 2000. The consequences for a breach of these minimum staff standards of behaviour would be a matter for each council to determine.</p> <p><i>Original proposal supported by 4 councils, 5 councils neutral, 6 councils against. (in written submissions)</i></p>
<p>25. Prescribe minimum standards for General Manager recruitment, contracts, performance management and termination</p>	<p>Not generally supported.</p> <p>While several councils support this reform it was only to the extent that best-practice recruitment practices (i.e. tools and support materials) are contained within Ministerial Orders. However, for these councils, prescription within the Act is not supported. It was noted that councils need flexibility in order to recruit staff that best suit their needs/situation.</p> <p>It was suggested by a number of Members that such a reform overreaches on one of the main responsibilities of Councillors and can open channels for an aggrieved individual to mount legal challenges.</p>	<p>No change</p> <p>Minimum standards will be set for general manager recruitment, contracts, performance management and termination. The current power to issue a Ministerial Order on the appointment and performance of general managers will remain.</p> <p><i>Note in submissions direct to Gov 6 councils supported, 2 were neutral and 6 were against.</i></p>
<p>29. Establish an independent rates oversight mechanism</p>	<p>Generally not supported, although this is another proposal on which councils were frustrated by a lack of detail.</p> <p>It was noted that appropriate oversight already exists for councils' financial management and that Local Government is not confident that the Economic Regulator has the experience or capacity to undertake this role.</p> <p>Councils should be given discretion and be guided by their community's needs which change over time.</p>	<p>Amended</p> <p>Rather than the proposed oversight of rates increases by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator, council Audit Panel chairs will be required to review any proposed rate changes that deviate from a council's Long-Term Financial Plan, and/or any changes to a council's LongTerm Financial Plan. Audit Panel Chairs will continue to be independent of their councils and the Panels must have a majority of independent members.</p>

	<p>Other reasons for a lack of support include that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils already have the Auditor General monitoring rating policies – this reform will therefore impose unnecessary additional prescription; and • Overuse may place unnecessary financial hardship on councils if they are required to pay for these interventions – an option for the State to resource any intervention measures should therefore be available. <p>A more logical approach, according to one Council, would be to consider how the Local Government Division could provide oversight on rating policies and monitor Council financial sustainability. Providing a more comprehensive financial benchmarking system has also been suggested.</p>	
<p>30. Set principles or guidelines for setting fees and charges</p>	<p>Not supported.</p> <p>While several councils are supportive of a more transparent and consistent approach to the setting of fees and charges there was concern that this approach is overly prescriptive and does not recognise the different scales and nature of councils business operations. For example, technology now allows differential and flexible parking meter charges to influence behaviour and improve traffic.</p> <p>Fee setting should be done on a true cost recovery basis with flexibility for local circumstances. There is no clear benefit to the proposed bureaucratic requirements.</p> <p>Reform which is only for purpose of consistency does not properly reflect the financial plans, practices and costs of an individual Council in providing the service for which the fees and charges apply, instead, the focus should be on providing principles or guidelines as a tool to assist councils.</p>	<p>Clarified to note</p> <p>The principles or guidelines will promote greater consistency in the approach to setting fees and charges without prescription of the amounts themselves. Fees and charges should be reflective of the cost of the service being delivered as they are not a tax to raise general revenue.</p> <p><i>In written submissions 11 councils opposed the original reform direction.</i></p>
<p>37. Create a power for the Director of Local Government to require an undertaking from a Council as a measure to address compliance issues</p>	<p>Not generally supported without further detail.</p> <p>An increase in oversight and intervention powers needs to be supported by powers to address non-compliance. Consideration must also be given to a review/appeal mechanism to address disagreement with the actions of the Director.</p>	<p>Clarified as</p> <p>The Director of Local Government will have the power to accept an undertaking by a council, councillor or general manager <u>to either correct an act of non-compliance with the Act, or to ensure that there is no recurrence.</u></p>

	<p>Other comments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That such a direction should only be issued by the Minister (an elected representative); • That such a direction should be directed to Council for Council to ensure the General Manager corrects the non-compliance; and • That direction should only be able to be issued once Council agrees there is an instance of non-compliance. 	<p><i>Original proposal supported by 10 councils, 2 councils neutral and 5 not supporting.</i></p>
<p>38. Establish a Monitor/Advisor role</p>	<p>Not generally supported.</p> <p>It is suggested that only the Director should be able to recommend the engagement of a Monitor (and Financial Controller), and that functions of elected councils should only be used in overridden by Ministerial decision.</p> <p>An alternative suggestion is that all Closed Session Agendas be sent to the Director of Local Government in order to monitor the information being discussed.</p> <p>Of the councils supporting this reform, it was suggested by one that it be extended to include a Mentor role.</p>	<p>Modified</p> <p>To be renamed ‘Advisor’. The Director of Local Government will have the power to require the appointment of an Advisor to enter a council to review its operations, request information from the council administration (and the Audit Panel), provide guidance to elected members and senior staff, and make recommendations to the council. Councils may also decide that an Advisor be engaged as an early intervention to assist a council before issues result in more serious outcomes.</p> <p><i>In direct submissions on original proposal 8 councils supported (in principle or with caveats, 2 were neutral and 6 did not support</i></p>
<p>39. Establish the power to appoint a Financial Controller</p>	<p>Not strongly supported. If progressed, there needs to be clarity around when this might occur. As mentioned previously, a review mechanism will need to be in place to allow for disagreements to be addressed.</p>	<p>Modified</p> <p>To be renamed ‘Financial Supervisor’. Similar to Reform Direction #38, the Director of Local Government may appoint a Financial Supervisor to a council to manage serious, demonstrated financial challenges, similar to powers that exist in New South Wales.</p> <p><i>In direct submissions on original proposal 6 councils supported (in principle or with caveats, 6 were neutral and 5 did not support</i></p>

<p>41. Provide for the Minister to dismiss a Council or individual Councillor</p>	<p>Mostly supported. Several councils feel that the current system of the Minister only having the power to dismiss the whole and not individual Councillors needs amendment, however a number of issues need to be considered and detail is not available.</p> <p>The concerns with this proposal relate to the role of the Director vs that of a Board.</p> <p>One Council feels very strongly that the powers of the Director should be reduced (not strengthened). This Council states that advice from the Director often conflicts with their own legal advice and that Local Government Officers are biased and at times incompetent in their investigations.</p>	<p>No change</p> <p>The Minister will have the ability to dismiss a council or councillor on recommendation of the Director. The Minister will retain the power to establish a Board of Inquiry and, in response to findings, recommend the Governor dismiss a council or councillor.</p> <p><i>In direct submissions on original proposal 11 councils supported 2 were neutral and 4 did not support</i></p> <p><i>For 36-42 SC noted that natural justice/procedural fairness would be important in legislation and these would require the sector to be consulted on in drafting Bill.</i></p>
<p>42. Create offences for mismanagement and to address poor governance (maladministration)</p>	<p>While further detail is required, as a concept this is mostly supported. The following concerns/comments were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance of councils should be left to councils (as much as possible), intervention should only occur when there is a clear breach of the Act; • The need for clarity around the role of Mayor in managing the elected body, General Manager in managing the organisation, and relationship between the General Manager and elected members; • A potential detrimental effect on Local Government management, those with management skills will seek positions with greater financial reward and less potential for criminal prosecution; and • This must relate only to those areas which the General Manager has control over, not to decisions by or actions of councillors. <p>Such provisions, both for the Council and individual Councillors, would need to be tested through the courts. One Council endorsed the Tasmanian Audit Office as the current means of potentially identifying any financial mismanagement.</p>	<p>Clarified as</p> <p>An offence of maladministration will be created for systemic failures or a major consequence resulting from a single act of impropriety, incompetence or neglect. The offence will be directed to all councillors, individual councillors and general managers but not other senior executive council staff.</p>

<p>45. Require councils to publish a compliance statement in the Annual Report</p>	<p>No clear sectorial position. Some councils feel that this reform is unnecessary and that existing audit panel requirements are sufficient to ensure compliance.</p> <p>Other councils feel that the Directions Paper does not provide sufficient detail in order to determine whether this reform is supported. Depending on the nature of this statement, there could be practical challenges with determining compliance – for example.</p> <p>If this reform was to be introduced, a compliance certificate would need to be developed so there is consistency, according to one Council.</p>	<p>Amended</p> <p>Compliance statements would only be completed for ‘material’ or ‘significant’ matters. General managers will be required to sign-off and account for the council’s material compliance obligations under the Act and some associated legislation, and report to the community a formal attestation that material compliance obligations have been met.</p>
<p>48. Introduce the option to create Regional Councils</p>	<p>No clear sectorial position. Some councils feel that this reform would allow communities to maintain their own identity while achieving economy of scale benefits of working with other councils.</p> <p>Support was largely predicated on participation in a regional Council not being compulsory and where there is no preferential treatment granted to a regional Council over individual councils.</p> <p>More information (re. establishment processes, governance arrangements, funding, accountability, and dissolution) is required before many councils can support this reform.</p> <p>Those who do not support this reform site the following as concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation risks are considered too high and benefits difficult to identify/quantify; • The impracticality of councils needing to deliver and operate in the same or similar manner; and • The potential unnecessary of this approach given existing Joint Authority powers. 	<p>Not proceeding</p>

6 June 2020

Tony Ferrell
Secretary
Department of Treasury and Finance
secretary@treasury.tas.gov.au

Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the PESRAC.

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993*, our functions being:

- (a) To protect and represent the interests and rights of councils in Tasmania;
- (b) To promote an efficient and effective system of local government in Tasmania; and
- (c) To provide services to member councils, councillors and employees of councils.

The views and opinions expressed in this submission are representative of the Local Government sector and consider the feedback from LGAT's members at a senior officer level. Given the tight timeframes it was not possible to formally engage the broad membership. However, officer level feedback was received from 27 of 29 councils. In addition, LGAT has been meeting regularly with the three regional council authorities and RDA Tasmania to discuss and compile the impacts being felt across the Local Government sector.

This submission is focused on impacts. LGAT is currently finalizing a second submission for PESRAC which is forward looking.

We are happy to engage directly with the PESRAC and support your engagement with our Members.

Please contact me at any time.



Your sincerely

Dr Katrena Stephenson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TASMANIAN COUNCILS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

1. General Comments

Key points:

- *Tasmanian councils have made significant financial and human resource investment in responding to covid-19*
- *all councils and communities will be impacted differently and have different pathways to recovery.*

The COVID19 pandemic has impacted every Australian home, business and community. Even for those who remained in work, the associated uncertainty and changes to our way of life have had an impact. COVID - 19 will continue to influence how we operate for a long period after people start to resume social contact and work.

To date all levels of government have invested to ensure that Australia's community capacity remains in place to support the operation and recovery of our society, economy and livelihoods post the COVID - 19 national shut-down. And while the investment from Federal and State Governments has been significant, Local Government's contribution cannot be underestimated.

COVID-19 can be seen as a magnifying glass that highlights and heightens divides that already existed in our community. Indicators such as financial disadvantage, job insecurity, digital access issues, homelessness, nutritional voids, alcohol, tobacco and recreational drug use, domestic abuse, mental health and gambling issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and its related disadvantage.

Tasmanian councils have already committed to nearly \$40 million in relief measures¹ to support their communities through the crisis and into recovery through a variety of means. These include:

- a 0% rates increase for the 2020/21 financial year;
- direct business and community support grant programs;
- hardship assistance policies

¹ To be applied through the period March 2020 through to 30 June 2021 and as at 1 June 2020. Councils are continuing to invest in this space.

- rates remissions for certain businesses;
- relaxing or waiving of certain penalties, fees and charges;
- suspended debt collection;
- waiving of rent on council properties; and
- a variety of local and regional programs to support business and communities.

For more detail see the relief measures link on LGAT's COVID-19 Resources Page:
<https://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/media-and-publications/covid-19>

This investment in relief equates to 6.85% of 2017-18 revenues (as published by the State Grants Commission). For the sake of comparison, State Government's investment in COVID relief represents 6.58% of revenue².

Overall, the Local Government sector anticipates the impact to the Tasmanian economy will be felt most acutely in the shorter term, although there is a high level of uncertainty around future impact aligned with the easing of restrictions as well as the risks of further outbreaks. It is anticipated that economic and social disruption will have long-lasting effects on the Australian, Tasmanian and local economies over a number of years.

All councils and communities will be impacted differently by COVID-19. Each local community has its own unique makeup of residents and businesses, which inherently means that some communities will be more vulnerable than others in both a health and economic sense. Because of this, as Local Governments plan their response and recovery activities, additional focus will be directed towards the community cohorts that will require more support than others.

² Economic and Fiscal Update Report May 2020

2. What impacts are currently being seen by your sector or members (including clients/households/individuals as relevant in your context) and what impacts are anticipated in the coming weeks and months?

Key points:

- *Councils' initial focus was on health and wellbeing and delivery of essential services and most experienced significantly increased workloads.*
- *Financial impacts flowed shortly after including through lost revenues, implementation of relief measures, increased cleaning costs and loss of TasWater dividends. Some councils, like businesses, have experienced cash flow difficulties.*
- *Less common council functions such as childcare and airports have been severely affected.*
- *In their communities, Councils are reporting increasing financial stress, disconnection and isolation. The impact on the use of volunteers by councils and local not-for-profits and sporting groups has been widely noted. There is increased demand for mental health services and domestic violence services.*

The immediate impacts for councils related to protecting the health and wellbeing of workers including staff, councillors, contractors and visitors to council sites. Councils were required to quickly work through the public health directions and implement appropriate precautions, including the closure of some business areas and a significant shift to staff working from home. This led to an immediate reduction in access to council facilities for ratepayers and community groups. It also proved difficult to maintain capital/maintenance programs and ensure a safe workplace with appropriate physical distancing, with some work being deferred.

There was an immediate and substantial increase in workload for many council workers, both in managing their own functions but also supporting communities and ratepayers. This combined with reporting on actual and likely world, Australian and Tasmanian COVID-19 scenarios has led to worker fatigue, nervousness and impact on mental wellbeing. While some have embraced new and innovative ways of working, others have been less able to adapt. Historic investment in cloud-based ICT systems has been a strongly determining factor in the ease of maintaining business as usual from less than usual workplaces.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents many challenges for Local Government. (Councils) themselves are complex medium-sized businesses experiencing many of the same challenges as other small to medium businesses, they are also the first point of contact with our communities and play a key role in supporting our local businesses and communities during times of challenge.

Local Governments are often the first line of connection to the communities they serve. During the coronavirus pandemic, they are being enlisted to enable and enforce the federal and state government's restrictions in regards to their communities needing to be physical distancing and self-isolating. Many of our essential services are delivered by the local councils, and often involve a high degree of interaction with vulnerable members in our communities ... (Councils) have customers, they have a large number of employees, key services, and costs and revenues to be managed during this time.

Toni Jones, Partner in Charge Industries, Enterprise and Local Government Sector Leader KPMG Australia.

Financial Impacts

It has not taken long for councils to start experiencing significant financial impacts from:

- lost fees and charges revenue e.g. parking, sports centres and child care;
- relief measures as outlined above, including deferral of payments, remissions, waivers and grants;
- lost revenue from TasWater dividends - with no dividends to be paid for the second ½ of this financial year (having an immediate cash flow impact) and the likelihood of no dividends none next year; and
- increased cleaning costs.

With cashflow a significant concern, the recent forward payment of the Federal Government's Financial Assistance grants is welcome. However, this is not universally effective, as the metro councils receive only the minimum grant. This was mitigated to some extent for the Cities of Hobart and Launceston where their successful State Government stimulus loan applications covered not just capital but some operational/relief cost. Provided these are processed and paid quickly it will provide significant relief on stressed cash flows.

Case Study - Council Airports: While not impacting all councils, the downturn in Tourism has had a particular impact where councils own and maintain airports.

It is clear that the Federal funding being provided to regional airlines is not leading to reduced pressure for those councils who own regional airports. For our small remote councils, the cost of regional airports is already a significant and unsustainable impost. This is being exacerbated under the COVID-19 Pandemic, with airlines now owing significant amounts to councils. For Flinders and King Islands there is a critical need to keep both airports open as vital public infrastructure. However, maintaining operational compliance standards (which prevents cost savings) while at the same time incurring a substantial loss of landing fee revenue places these councils under significant financial strain.

Flinders and King Islands have identified three major issues related to the sustainability of the airports:

- Large infrastructure costs related to upgrading the runways, taxi ways and aprons.
- High operational costs to address the day-to-day safety and management of the airport and its Terminal (including labour, plant and equipment required to operate and maintain the airport facilities).
- Challenging financial conditions: For example on Flinders, Sharp Airlines currently owes council an amount equal to 50% of its annual Passenger Takes, experiencing a 30% decline in passenger travel in the first month of COVID-19.

On Flinders Island landing fees and passenger taxes represent 20% of total rate income, on King Island cash losses from the airport are expected to be equivalent to 25% of rate income.

Case Study- Childcare: Similarly, while limited to eight councils, the impacts on council run childcare facilities has been significant. Tasmanian councils play an integral part in ensuring access to early learning and care for local communities across Tasmania. These centres, whilst owned by the Local Government, are operated as separate entities, where any operational deficits must be funded from the centres' operating cash reserves.

Across the impacted councils, LGAT estimates that around 80 casual and 90 permanent staff have been impacted by decreased childcare revenue. Prior to COVID-19 these centres were supporting upwards of 1000 children.

Since the introduction of the Federal Government's Early Education and Care Relief Package, these centres have all been under considerable financial pressure due to the limited financial support available to centres owned by Local Government. Unlike privately owned centres, council run centres are unable to access Job Keeper Payments and are not eligible for the Exceptional Circumstances Supplementary Payments. This ineligibility continues to put the centres under financial strain, with some councils making the difficult decision to temporarily close their centres. As we enter the recovery phase the childcare sector is crucial in supporting people to return to work. To ensure centres remain financially viable and sustainable, financial support from the Federal Government for Local Government centres is essential.

Other impacts

There have been a range of impacts on councils' operations and services. For example, councils had to reluctantly suspend or cancel community programs and events. Less predictable was the significant increase in household waste and recycling volumes related to the shift to people being home based. On a more positive note all councils have reported increased used of walkways and cycleways for passive recreation.

Overcoming the statutory requirements for council meetings to be conducted face-to-face emerged quickly as a priority with a varying ability of councils to switch to remote/online meetings with public access through live streaming. Sometimes this is

Huon Valley Children's Services provides Long Day Care (LDC) and outside School Hours Care (OSHC) for up to 171 children across Dover, Geeveston and Huonville.

The closest private providers are located in Cygnet (45 places LDC & OSHC) and Huonville (26 places LDC & OSHC).

The provision of Care by the Council is on a fee for service basis, where no financial support is provided by the rate payer. The Services all rely on the fees paid by families, funding from the Federal Government Childcare Subsidy System as well as the Community Childcare Fund.

related to councils' ICT infrastructure but in some of our rural and remote communities, access to sufficient high-quality internet proved challenging for both the council collectively and for individual staff and councillors. For example, on King Island, the only facility with sufficient bandwidth to conduct videoconferencing is the school. To enable the Council chambers to live stream meetings would require a new 4G Tower at the cost of many millions.

Regardless of technology issues, there have been positives and negatives related to moving to an online environment with more councils live streaming their council meetings and experiencing significantly enhanced public participation.

One of the positives out of this state of emergency is that the long experienced Local Government collegiality and collaboration has been magnified with regular engagement between key officers across council through a variety of innovative and electronic means.

COVID-Safe Business Planning

As restrictions ease and councils begin to resume operations, like other businesses they have to undertake the Work Health and Safety/Business Safe Plan requirements. Given the diversity of workplace types overseen by councils and the broad nature of interactions with those workplaces, many are finding this particularly onerous. This was unanticipated and the workload significant.

There have been expectations on council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) expressed publicly by State Government - in relation to education and enforcement - but with no clarity or detail on what this will involve. Regardless of the final position, any COVID related responsibility for EHOs is likely to impact councils, as there is a nationwide shortage of EHOs.

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) has identified that there is little evidence to suggest that the current Tasmanian EHO workforce is large enough, nor adequately or equitably distributed or coordinated to minimise public health risks associated with environmental hazards and provide an optimal health protection workforce under the current regulatory requirements, let alone with additional duties. LGAT is currently working with UTAS, the Department of Health and the EPA on building future EHO capacity in Tasmania.

.idcommunity reports the following COVID-19 impacts on Tasmania:

- GRP change (-9.4%);
 - Local job change (-7.2%);
 - Employed resident change (-7.2%);
 - Local jobs (-17,915) – compared to 18/19 average;
 - Net migration expected to be 85% down in 2021.
 - -4,537 jobs in accommodation and food services
-

Communities

In relation to community impacts, councils have particularly noted the effects of *closure of businesses* both temporary and permanent, increasing financial stress, disconnection and isolation. The *impact on the use of volunteers* by councils and local not-for-

profits and sporting groups has been widely experienced. A number of councils have reported an *increased demand for mental health services* and domestic violence services. It was noted they are seeing many families experiencing poverty for the first time.

Councils also noted the difficulty faced by community cohorts where there was no access to *affordable and reliable internet*. This was felt to have significantly impacted on opportunities for education and social engagement during COVID-19 restrictions. All councils have reported that their communities feel *overloaded with information* and have difficulty in understanding or applying advice, especially where there have been apparent contradictions in verbal and written guidance.

Councils have identified a *range of vulnerable groups* including single parents (no respite), migrants and humanitarian entrants, people with disabilities, young people, people with no fixed abode and seasonal workers.

They note that many businesses are struggling with cashflow and some have been less able to move to an online environment. The *disproportionate impact on tourism and hospitality businesses* is consistently reported but the impact on the arts sector was also emphasised. *Uncertainties of global markets* and future commodity trade positions are perceived as impacting primary producers, while some communities have experienced the closure of banking services.

3. What factors are likely to shape the medium and longer-term impacts for your sector/members?

Key points:

- *Financial and operational uncertainty limits the capacity to forward plan.*
- *Council revenues will be impacted by a freeze on any increases to general rates.*
- *Councils will continue to be able to function, but we may see a contraction in discretionary spending.*

The high level of budget and operational uncertainty limits the capacity to forward plan and there is an inexorable link between the speed of Tasmania's recovery (capacity to pay rates) and councils' ability to deliver and be financially sustainable.

For the Local Government sector, the worsening economic outlook will impact on the sector's expenditure and revenue sources. Rates revenue will be negatively affected in 2020-21 due to most councils responding to political and community pressure and not applying an indexation to general rates. Combined with an increase in bad debts, negative impacts on fees and charges revenue due to lower levels of economic activity and service use, it is anticipated councils will run deficit budgets for at least the next few years. While this is unlikely to see councils fall over, it is likely to lead to a focus on statutory services and may result in a contraction of discretionary spending and service delivery.

While not COVID-19 related, a compounding pressure on councils is the erosion of the rate base. This is not, as commonly suggested, simply a matter of demographic change but can relate to emerging business models and legislated rates concessions - such as is the case for charitably owned independent living units and University of Tasmania student accommodation and the transfer of public housing stock to not for profit entities.

Each year LGAT releases a Council Cost Index³. The 2020 / 21 Index was released in March this year and was 2.18%. However, as mentioned above most councils are not applying any increase to general rates for next financial year and the economic outlook is looking particularly uncertain for their 2021-22 budgets. Like any business councils will be keeping a close eye on the speed of recovery and contemplating revenue and expenditure measures to return to surplus in the medium term. Councils

³ Since 2006 LGAT has published a Council Cost Index (CCI) to better reflect the cost increases associated with the delivery of Local Government services recognising that the CPI alone does not reflect cost increases across the range of council services. Wage costs, road and bridge costs and the CPI are the most common elements used in Local Government cost indexes across Australia and Tasmania is no different in that these elements are significant components of operating costs.

- Turner, K (2020), *Councils as Place Makers (draft)*, Regional Development Australia Tasmania.

will be reviewing their financial management strategy, their budgets, their service levels, and their long-term plans. They will be applying vacancy controls over the next 12 months and where possible seeking to delay pay increases. Local Government will also be looking to embed further efficiencies and collaborations driven by the necessity of responding to COVID-19.

There will be a strong focus on council capital programs as a key plank in economic stimulus. Twenty councils will be accessing \$147 million State Government three-year interest free stimulus loans. All councils are eligible for an allocation of funding under the Federal Government's Road Transport and Community Infrastructure Stimulus Program (\$16million statewide) and a number of councils have already brought

forward some of their capital program. New capital initiatives can be a double-edged sword for councils, however, often bringing with them significant depreciation costs and asset renewal liabilities.

*The multiplier effects of Local Government place-making is notable; our survey found the 29 Councils were actively delivering (i.e. procuring for and constructing) \$389.5 Million of projects which modelling shows creates 1,744 direct jobs in construction and 1,153 indirect jobs in other industries and with multiplier effects add an extra \$193.90 Million to the Tasmanian economy.**

As will be the case for many Tasmanian businesses, the ongoing physical distancing and hygiene requirements will have a considerable impact on council operations. Councils will also be ensuring they are prepared for a second wave or another more traditional emergency event (fire, flood); noting that their flexibility to respond will now be significantly constrained.

Other concerns for the medium to longer term include:

- Recovery/retention of volunteers for community groups and council facilities;
- Risks to waste recovery markets;
- Community engagement processes and community event restrictions;
- Assisting organisations with the development of Safety Plans as more industries open and community groups try to re-establish; and
- Vacancy control/tightening resources.

Communities

When it comes to their communities, councils anticipate that anxiety around the return of tourists (particularly cruise boats) and relaxing of physical distancing will remain an issue over the medium to longer term, especially for vulnerable groups.

The likely ongoing restrictions on large scale gatherings and the threat to viability of sporting groups was regularly noted in our consultation with councils, as was the concern about individual vulnerability upon cessation of the JobSeeker/JobKeeper payments and the freeze on evictions. There is strong concern for young people with a view that school leavers will struggle to compete in the job market. The risk of an increase in child development delays as a result of limited use of early learning centres was also raised.

Nearly all councils indicated that recovery in the tourism sector will be vital to regional recovery and many expressed concerns at the vulnerability of services reliant on volunteers or donations. As indicated earlier, the uncertainty with respect to macro-economic environment, trade and supply chains is of concern for a range of industries.

4. What data or information can currently be provided to the Council on the nature and magnitude of impacts for your sector/members?

Key points:

- *The value of Local Government COVID-19 relief measures to date is approaching \$40M*
- *On average, councils' relief measures equate to 7.8% of rates revenue.*
- *On average, councils will have deficits in the order of \$2M for 20-21.*
- *The value of planned capital works across the LG sector in 20-21 is nearly \$137M.*

LGAT furnished several financial data requests to councils, with 26 councils able to assist. It should be noted however that it has been challenging for councils to make accurate estimates ahead of their budget process, with policy decisions still being made, the impacts of decisions made still being assessed and the impact on rates, fees and charges through decreased use, remissions, discounts or arrears still being measured. That being said, a broad sector picture is developing.

Key data:

<p>Estimated value of all policy decisions made including freeze on rate increases from end of March to 30 June 2021.</p> <p>(excludes capital program and loss of TasWater Dividends).</p>	<p>\$38,946,949</p>
<p>Estimated value of relief measures to 30 June 2021 (as provided previously) as a % of general rates</p>	<p>Council average 7.8%</p> <p>Range: 3 - 16.8%</p>
<p>Estimated value of relief measures to 30 June 2021 (as provided previously) as a % of total revenue</p>	<p>Council average 4.1%</p> <p>Range: 3 – 8.4%</p>
<p>Predicted deficit for 19-20</p>	<p>Council average -\$836,335</p> <p>Range: +\$1.5M to -\$9.5M</p>
<p>Predicted deficit for 20-21</p>	<p>Council average -\$2.018M</p> <p>Range: +\$467,000* to -\$12M</p> <p>*Only 2 councils predicting a surplus of around \$500k each</p>
<p>Current borrowings</p>	<p>Council average \$7.63M</p> <p>Range: \$0 – \$55M</p>
<p>Predicted borrowings to end of 20-21</p>	<p>Council average \$11.523M</p> <p>Range: \$0 – \$86M</p>
<p>Estimate of income lost through closed business units, downturn in fees/charges</p>	<p>Council average \$1.735M</p> <p>Range: \$0 – \$26.94M</p>
<p>Value of unpaid TasWater dividends 19-20</p>	<p>\$10M</p>
<p>Value of TasWater dividends 20-21</p>	<p>Anticipated at least \$10M likely \$20M</p>
<p>Anticipated additional cleaning costs across all council business for 6 months (based on 24 councils)</p>	<p>Council average \$30,000</p> <p>Range: \$0 – \$90,000</p>

Staff losses (number people and FTE) casuals	208 (estimated 78 FTEs). Note figures do not differentiate stand downs vs permanent losses.
Staff losses (number people and FTE) part-time	12 (estimated 6.4 FTEs)
Staff losses (number people and FTE) full-time	5 FTEs
Value of planned capital program 19-20	Total \$110.440M Average \$4.2M Range \$2.6M to \$59M
Value of capital works brought forward	Total \$25.326M Average \$9.7M Range \$0M to \$26M
Anticipated value of capital works program 20-21	Total \$136.772M Average \$5.26M Range \$2.8 to \$43.9M
Value of any new service offerings around recovery	\$5.1M

5. What mitigation measures are currently in place that aim to address these impacts?

Key points:

- *Councils have implemented a range of relief and mitigation measures and these are communicated through the LGAT website.*

Councils have implemented a range of relief and mitigation measures and as outlined earlier many of these have been captured in a single resource by LGAT. This is updated regularly on our website to reflect new decisions, but by way of example the document as at 3 June 2020 is provided as Attachment 1.

Other examples include:

- 1) By LGAT: regular communication and advice on Government announcements and council specific responses, development of templates such as the Hardship Policy and Remote Meeting Guidelines, refreshing of LGAT Procurement contracts to broaden local offerings.
- 2) For council operations: employment of mental health and wellbeing coordinators; cloud based IT solutions; leveraging off a strong financial position; reviewing and updating the long term financial plan; safe business planning; deferring enterprise bargaining; collaboration and resource sharing with other councils; and implementation of cross disciplinary response teams.
- 3) For communities: free flu vaccination programs, engagement of professionals to support business recovery planning, regional project and priority identification; volunteer engagement; planning for more partnerships across council, private sector and not for profits; and local employment programs.

Councils are also promoting safe community activities, supporting the delivery of crisis services by impacted not for profits, delivering a range of community services online, undertaking community engagement surveys and connecting community organisations and businesses.

6. What impacts are not being mitigated or for which there is no plan in place to mitigate?

Key points:

- *Councils perceive there may be insufficient skilled labour and resources for capital works.*
- *The impact of a potential second wave is of concern to all.*
- *The immediate impact on volunteer numbers will be hard to address given that volunteers are predominantly from the vulnerable older population.*

Two key areas were identified as being difficult to mitigate:

- 1) The competition for skilled labour and resources to undertake building and construction is seen as a key risk for recovery with a shortage of skilled labour driving up costs and delaying projects even prior to COVID-19. With borders closed and no access to interstate or foreign skilled workers this will be exacerbated. Additionally, when it comes to construction there are difficulties in ensuring appropriate physical distancing – *it is simply not always safe or feasible in relation to key tasks*. If there is to be recovery based on construction and building, what measures are being put in place to ensure there will be a skilled workforce to support such initiatives, particularly into regional areas of the state?
- 2) There is concern that no level of Government will have capacity to respond to a second wave of pandemic or a deep and prolonged economic recession.

At a community level councils noted:

- There is no real strategy about managing increased visitation from outside a municipality – messaging needs to be developed to alleviate anxiety.
- There seems to be nothing to address sporting groups and community groups other than onerous workplace safety requirements.
- There is a lack of readiness for support for individuals and families when social security payments are reduced.
- There needs to be consideration of the profound and long-term impact on young people.
- There needs to be a continued call for personal responsibility for basic mitigation measures to protect vulnerable people.
- The immediate impact on volunteer numbers will be hard to address given that volunteers are predominantly from the vulnerable older population.

7. What responses, both within the sector and more broadly, are front-of-mind and over what timeframes - what should be stopped, what should continue and what should be started?

Key points:

- *Lack of certainty about TasWater dividends and accuracy of long-term financial plans.*
- *There are increased service delivery expectations in the face of declining revenues and skills shortages.*
- *Councils have significant capacity to stimulate local economies through their capital programs.*
- *LG engagement must continue as we move from response to recovery, through the various recovery committees and with local leaders.*

Financial

For councils, the long-term financial impacts are front of mind, particularly going into a budget period. The lack of certainty about TasWater revenue, as illustrated by the immediate non-payment of dividends, has councils deeply concerned about the accuracy of their long-term financial plans. There was a strong feeling that councils had already provided significant relief through a range of measures and should not have to provide relief through dividend hits as well.

Related to financial concerns is the expectation that councils will increase their service delivery, while at the same time seeing a significant decline in revenue. For example, there are likely to be increased requirements for

“Local Government is different to State/Federal Government in that while we have to deal with zero increases etc. and loss of income, ultimately the same people (community) will have to deal with those impacts”.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), but no increase in available EHOs or revenue to cover their expense. Similarly, there are proposed reductions in planning time frames, with the increased workload that places on planners. However, similar to EHOs, there is a national shortage of planners and no extra income to bring on more. In general, determining how to respond to sudden needs and how to do business as usual in the face of reduced funding is occupying the attention of all councils in Tasmania.

The status of Enterprise Agreements (EAs) has also required early consideration. Some councils are at the end of Enterprise Agreements and are able to delay enterprise bargaining and freeze pays for several months. Other councils are having to apply an automatic pay increase as per a current EA. The difficulty of varying EAs in the context of busier than usual council activity, has seen most councils reluctant to go down that path, however this will inevitably lead to inequitable staff outcomes across the sector. Advice to LGAT is that there is limited opportunity for a coordinated approach to Fair Work as each EA has to be dealt with separately. It is understood that the broad issue of EAs and automatic pay increases was discussed at national cabinet without resolution.

Despite the issues outlined above, councils have significant capacity to stimulate local economies through their capital programs and many are exploring what they can bring forward to generate additional employment opportunities, but note the limitations around the availability of skilled workers outlined earlier. The challenges of program management for a significantly increased capital works and maintenance program, including project governance, delivery capacity, procurement challenges, monitoring and reporting, are not to be underestimated.

Engaging Communities/Local Recovery

Now of course, there is a focus on the gradual reopening of Tasmania and what that means for councils. There should be a continued understanding that steps on the road map to recovery may not automatically occur in their current order, and that the timeline may be affected by outbreaks, clusters or other unanticipated events. A council's roadmap to recovery may look a little different than that mapped by the State Government and may not directly align with the dates announced by the Premier. Councils are undertaking a raft of protective measures to make sure when recreational spaces and facilities do open, the safety of their community and council staff is the highest priority.

One of the issues of concern for Local Government has been the limited use of established community recovery arrangements. While acknowledging the nature of the disaster is different from a fire or flood, the core principle of recovery needing to be led by communities is still essential. It is important that the processes put in play by the PSERAC include engagement at the local level and that the State's response addresses the unique recovery requirements of the regions. Engagement must continue as we move from response to recovery, through the various recovery committees and with local leaders to ensure there is a full understanding of impact and recovery needs.

Front of mind for communities is the challenge around bringing business out of hibernation and reconnecting to employment opportunities; access to affordable

housing where work is located and addressing the health and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19, including those stemming from social isolation. It was also raised by a few councils that funding being provided to NGO's who are not normally involved in recovery should have reduced priority going forward.

8. What has been overtaken?

Key points:

- *Planned and strategic activity has been delayed.*
- *There has been an increase in single use and disposable products.*
- *Councils are seeing major private sector projects put on hold.*
- *Face to face engagement and community events have been severely disrupted.*

Councils have consistently reported that they have had to push planned activity to the side for the last few months (and likely some months more) to respond to issues created by COVID-19. The deferral of activity spans strategic (e.g. community planning); operational (e.g. EBAs, community events) and capital works activity (e.g. DEC/Wilkinsons Point).

Single use and disposable products have popped back up everywhere within the community and many businesses that used to promote and encourage bringing in containers/bags from home have had to refuse the practice. Most cafes refuse to handle "keep cups".

Councils also noted that the new work health and safety requirements have pushed other regulatory reforms into background and that COVID-19 responses have overtaken the community's "war on waste".

Councils have reported seeing the following in their communities:

- Increased short-term housing availability (including use of hotel rooms for homeless) but no significant easing of overall housing affordability, particularly in the south;
- Limited community participation in social wellbeing activities;
- Business expansion plans being placed on hold;
- Community events on hold;
- Reduced youth engagement;
- Major projects on hold, eg MONA hotel;
- A temporary easing of congestion; and

- Increased use of walkways and bicycle paths.

9. What would help your sector/members re-employ where there have been reductions in jobs, or grow employment levels?

Key points:

- *Councils have largely been able to avoid significant staffing impacts.*
- *Casual staff servicing business areas closed under public health directions have been most impacted.*
- *Local Government is a significant employer.*

When considering the sector as a whole, Local Government has endeavored to maintain existing staff through a variety of activities such as redeployment and bring forward internal project work. Consequently, there have not been significant staffing impacts. Where staff have been staff reductions (stand downs predominantly), they have largely been confined to those councils who run specific business functions affected by public health orders such as sports and aquatic centres and childcare centres. Affected councils have stood down or laid off casuals but mostly have redeployed permanent employees. While it is likely there will be future reengagement of those employees as restrictions ease and services recommence, in the short term access to Job Keeper or equivalent would be beneficial.

Employment is one of the key areas where Local Government has made a significant contribution to their local economies. In addition to providing services, councils are a significant employer – over 3000 FTEs in Tasmania and around 200,000 nationally. Importantly, Local Government is a significant employer in rural and regional areas.

In Councils, as with other businesses, the pandemic has exposed the need for a highly skilled and adaptable workforce.

There are undoubtedly opportunities for councils to grow employment to deliver programs which promote economic and social recovery – with appropriate funding. Many councils already play a significant role in delivering health and wellbeing services, apprentice/trainee programs, volunteer recruitment and support, and economic development.

Given that employment is often central to notions of economic development, councils can be understood as key employers and businesses, particularly in some areas where the council is the largest source of employment. This helps to affirm that councils can be important economic actors, but does little to shine light on the role and functions that they perform in the pursuit of local and regional development goals⁴.

10. Possible Priorities

State Government

Councils were asked what they felt should immediate priorities for State Government now and into the future. Suggestions included:

- An accelerated program of residential rental construction.
- Meaningful engagement with Local Government in relation to local recovery actions.
- Legislation to provide certainty around future TasWater dividends.
- Provision of robust and well-resourced emergency response capability with health of community a focus.
- A “Rural on Purpose” policy to support jobs growth, regional and remote population retention and workforce growth solutions for rural industries.
- A strategic whole of state approach to the Circular Economy.
- Investment in energy including hydrogen and Marinus.
- Advocacy for Local Government access to Federal Childcare Financial Support Packages.
- Targeted actions for young people, noting they are generally less resilient.
- Work closely with the Local Government sector to leverage infrastructure investments to maximise benefits for local communities and contractors; and
- Land Use Planning reform – the process needs to be finalised with a higher level of urgency.

In developing policy or programs for which Local Government is anticipated to play a role, it is important to note that the overall financial position of councils and their capacity is variable and there needs to be sufficient flexibility in responses to account for those differences.

In relation to supporting communities, councils noted the following possible actions by State Government:

- Support for major events with clear and logical guidelines.
- Reducing the onerous and bureaucratic approach to Business Safe Planning.
- Clear and consistent communication around restrictions and guidelines.
- Plan for homelessness once hotels are no longer an option.
- Increased free wifi, particularly in low SES communities.
- Funding for community transport e.g. home delivery of groceries, prescriptions etc for vulnerable.
- Technology funding for State schools to improve learning outcomes based on experience of learning from home.
- Continue implementation of strategic growth agenda.
- Systems and funding for place-based solutions.
- Inspiring leading policy innovation that supports regional productivity with small to medium enterprise growth into high value add products and experiences in the regions.
- Investing in regional infrastructure to inspire new visitor experiences.
- Investment in skills and training.
- Transitioning from an immediate relief and rescue model to a longer-term community led empowerment model.
- City Deal Projects to stimulate the economy.
- Increased business and employment support through hubs and incubator projects.
- Sufficiently resourced outreach services dealing directly with vulnerable cohorts.

Federal Government

When asked to contemplate what was needed from the Federal Government, overwhelmingly councils indicated that restoring the level of Financial Assistance Grants (or non-grant untied funding) should be a priority. They also noted that infrastructure programs should have to provide both a community benefit and an economic stimulus and noted that grant processes needed to be simplified and expedited (they routinely take 5-6 months).

Federal investment for communities should focus on jobs growth, housing security, food security, investment in infrastructure critical to improving logistics and innovation (to value add to primary industries), Project Marinus; placed based initiatives and investment in economic development; strategic and prompt investment in mitigation plans and actions for future shocks, continuation of JobKeeper and

JobSeeker and more City Deals. There is also a need to consider the particular issues related to council owned airports in regional areas.

All levels of Government should be supporting individuals to look for/seek change, innovate, and be open to doing things differently.

11. Resilience

As we move out of the response stage an important focus must be on resilience – at individual, organisational/business and community levels.

For councils, resilience has the following components:

- Rebuilt financial sustainability;
- Up to date Business Continuity and Pandemic Plans;
- Innovative practice;
- More interdisciplinary teams;
- Workforce planning to reduce key dependencies;
- Shared learnings;
- Collaboration across geographical boundaries;
- Strong connectedness to communities and strong leadership.

They also noted that it will be important to review legislation and ensure there is capacity to adapt requirements, particularly timeframes, during an incident. A few councils felt that organizational resilience stem from a stronger focus on core statutory roles.

I think most Councils will acknowledge that whilst everyone would have a Business Continuity Plan in place, very few were prepared for a pandemic

Councils indicated that community resilience would stem from:

- A diversified economy with increased social engagement with economic producers.
- Direct community capacity building to ensure communities have strong networks and methods of communication and staying in touch with each other as the environment changes.
- Not becoming complacent around health and hygiene.
- Higher value adding to local world class primary products.

- Diversity of tourism – with operators taking a broad, rather than specialised focus (e.g. just Chinese market).
- Stronger trading relations.
- Multi-skilled work forces that are adaptable and can step up in times of need.
- Ongoing commitment to place based Community and Economic Development.

Key to note is that councils found that distance, remoteness and isolation added a particular dimension to the pandemic response. While engagement of ‘hard to reach’ citizens was challenging for some, another perspective on the presence of vulnerable residents has been that there is now a greater understanding of who and where they are.

12. Community Social Recovery and the Importance of Place

Tasmania has well established recovery arrangements through the Emergency Management Act 2006, the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements (2019) and through the State Special Plan for Recovery. Throughout these arrangements the fundamental principle of recovery is that it should be community led. As such Local Government is a critical player in recovery and historically this has been well recognised.

A significant amount of recovery planning is also occurring at the municipal and regional level, particularly in relation to social recovery. Councils are currently having input into this process through the municipal recovery coordinators through the social recovery committees.

Councils are well placed to inform initial recovery efforts with local knowledge and networks, noting that the fundamental principle of recovery is that it should be local community led. As we move forward into longer term recovery planning, developing mechanisms for Local Government to inform and guide efforts needs to be a key focus.

From an economic recovery perspective, traditional sectoral approaches do not provide the means for adequately dealing with the challenges and their constantly changing faces. They don’t help identify or understand how we can respond to effectively recover, rebuild and importantly transitioning our economy to be more resilient in the future. To support this and more so than ever, recovery from the COVID - 19 emergency, will require all levels of government, stakeholders and community members to work together to leverage everyone’s contribution.

Recovery will be long-term, and the planning for it needs to be strength based, people centred and anchored in place, it should be planned strategically but be dynamic.

Responses that better combine all levels of government, business and the community sector offer the greatest opportunity to support community wellbeing and livelihoods.

They should also reflect the reality of how our places work including through enabling analysis of where there are opportunities to transition our local economies to be more resilient.

Reflecting on learnings from the Black Saturday Bushfires, authors Taylor and Goodman⁴ noted that councils *reported “feeling disrespected. They found prior rules and roles were overturned and disregarded, they often struggled to establish lines of authority, and felt inadequately resourced for the tasks they had to pursue. ... politicisation of bushfire recovery, struggles with being insufficiently resourced to deal with the media... becoming the ‘meat in the sandwich’.*

State Government approaches that compounded the difficulties for Local Government, included a ‘one size fits all’ approach; an overemphasis on physical infrastructure and the built environment; the setting of unworkable time lines for project delivery; and in particular, approaches that weren’t aligned to ‘community development’”.

LGAT asked councils what community social recovery looked like for them. Firstly, they acknowledged that community social recovery will not be quick, with an anticipated time span of 1 to 2 years. It would stem from community led models (such as outlined in the National Principles for Disaster Recovery) and that Local Government was a key facilitator of connections between communities and other regional, state and national programs.

Safe business planning and new forms of service delivery are a key plank of recovery as are active volunteers and community groups and strong, proactive partnerships. Some noted that recovery will be variable and is dependent on how events are reshaped and how quickly consumer confidence builds.

Communities will need direct and targeted information and engagement. Many people may be reluctant to return to life as it was before the pandemic. Whilst there are still restrictions and timeframes subject to public health advice councils do not

Social community recovery should be community led. Each community has its own issues and strengths which will determine how best to meet those needs. Strong links between the community members and those seeking to support the recovery is essential.

⁴ Taylor, D. & Goodman, H. Place-Based and Community-Led: Specific Disaster Preparedness and Generalisable Community Resilience. CatholicCare Bushfire Community Recovery Service. Melbourne, 2015.

want to be building expectations and then not be able to deliver. There needs to be understanding that everyone's experience of COVID-19 is different.

Recovery initiatives already being delivered by councils include:

- Financial relief and support.
- Assistance with Business Safe Planning.
- Volunteer appreciation programs.
- 'Buy local' promotions.
- Appointment of specialist recovery staff.
- Joined up community/subregional/regional recovery planning.
- Business Mentoring program.
- Social and Economic Recovery Committees/ COVID Response Committee that work across the diverse functional areas of councils.
- Bringing forward of capital works.
- Targeted grants – eg technology support.
- Leaflet drops/kindness cards.

13. Where to Next

During Black Saturday and beyond, the capacity of Local Government for closer relations with community compared to other levels of government, was overlooked. It was noted that emergencies were seen to make this local quality 'fragile, easily forgotten, and can be undermined'.

Such underestimation can stem from not understanding the role of councils. As the Australian Local Government Association articulates:

- *Local governments have increasingly taken the lead role in regional economic development reflecting their presence on the ground, control of many of the levers of growth and Federal, State and Territory Governments' withdrawal from these roles. The vast majority of councils have economic development strategies and provide investment, training and networking to stimulate and grow local economies.*
- *Local Government brings strengths that other levels of government do not – a grass roots perspective that is apolitical and the resources and capacity to support local implementation in the majority of communities.*
- *The scope of local government roles and responsibilities which make it an important partner. Public health, water, sewerage, aged care, childcare, roads, bridges, walking and cycling paths, community transport, economic development, immunisations, recreation and sport, culture and arts, social inclusion, and cultural cohesion, etc.*
- *Local Government along with the Australian, State and Territory Governments, are jointly involved in funding or service delivery in a large number of policy areas including*

transport infrastructure, human services (child care, aged care), land use planning, population management, natural resources and environmental management, emergency management, and many other generators of economic development at the local level.

- *Local Government supports intergovernmental efforts and its role in reform. It has extensive roles in the development and implementation of regulations that could hamper or accelerate recovery.*
- *The management and productivity of cities is a fundamental building block of the vitality and health of the nation. Local governments have the primary responsibilities for the efficiency and amenity of cities, the quality and efficiency of development assessment processes, investment in economic infrastructure such as roads and public realm, and a range of regulatory levers to manage the complex issues such as construction impacts, parking provision and turnover, outdoor dining and flexible land uses.*
- *Regional economies are increasingly driven at the local level, with employment attraction and retention strategies run by Local Government. Business support networks, coordinated strategic planning, freight route modelling to improve productivity and coordination of advocacy for targeted funding s investment opportunities are all driven from the local level.*

Local Government is as an undervalued sector, which is at the same time expected to do the impossible, pick up any slack and be all things to everybody, particularly when help is needed regardless of capacity or resource constraints.

Local Government is community-based; it is community oriented and community-driven.

Local Government can do a lot to help Tasmania's recovery but of course it can't do everything.

LGAT is nearing completion of another submission for PESRAC that outlines some possible partnership pathways between State and Local Government, as well as industry, to deliver social and economic improvements for Tasmania. In addition to highlighting some existing initiatives which can be leveraged for broader outcomes (such as the Department of Health funded Local Government Health and Wellbeing Project), we have identified the transformative potential of a circular economy led recovery for Tasmania and provided a possible process for mapping local economies to determine what circular economy opportunities exist and how they should be supported.

Perhaps more so than any other stakeholder, councils deliver the services and infrastructure that shape the daily experiences of Tasmanians. Services that are major determinants of our community's prosperity and wellbeing. Councils are place shapers who drive most people's attachment to, and satisfaction with the area in which they live, making them an essential partner in working to create liveable places.

The greater Tasmanian community and its associated economy must, more than ever, be thought of as resulting from the combination of connected and interdependent smaller local areas.

We must focus locally to effect positive social and economic change at the regional and State level. It is imperative for our State's future success, and we must ensure that there are opportunities for all, and that no community is left behind. To address the specific priorities that exist at a local community level, flexible service delivery and funding models are often required for effective results.

While the specific focus of Local Government might be local and regional, these geographic areas represent the fundamental building blocks that make the State a great place to be.

The Local Government sector must be considered a crucial partner in any attempts to effect, economic, social and cultural change and to promote strong, healthy, liveable, viable, sustainable communities. It is not a secondary stakeholder.