



13th May 2022

The Hon. Sue Smith AM
Chair
Local Government Review Board
Via Email: lgboard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Chair

RE: Future of Local Government Review

The Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority (STCA) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Future of Local Government Review (FoLGR).

Our submission's focus is on shaping the role of local government in responding to climate change. It reiterates the STCA's comments on the Tasmanian Government's review the Climate Change (State Action) Act and furthers the climate program we are currently delivering across southern Tasmanian councils to harmonise climate action across the sector. It seeks a codesigned integrated approach that embeds climate responses across local government roles and responsibilities.

The STCA recognises that the climate has warmed by 1.1C and regardless of global efforts to reduce carbon emissions, 2C of warming is inevitable, increasing the intensity and frequency of natural hazards, as well as novel climates. Deloitte Economics, in a Feb 2022 report, estimates that natural disasters cost Australia \$39 billion annually and by 2060, under a low emissions scenario, this will rise to \$73 billion.

The STCA further understands that climate change is a threat multiplier affecting local governments and the communities they represent. It is an issue of material financial risk across physical, economic transition and litigation dimensions. Regulatory and client expectations for climate risk assessment and disclosure, by corporate and public sector, are accelerating, posing risks and opportunities that require understanding, assessment, and appropriate action.

Local government is at the forefront of responding to climate impacts through its responsibilities and statutory roles that includes land use planning and development control; asset management; and service delivery. Increasingly communities are looking to local government to provide solutions, manage, transfer or share risk

associated with climate impacts as can be seen in the recent floods, bushfires and coastal erosion impacts.

The uneven climate policy landscape means that local government currently finds itself in the unenviable position of seeking to manage the burden and costs of responsibility without clear guidance and coordination from federal and state governments on a consistent approach to managing climate change risks. It also faces potential liability for its decision making in addition to structural and institutional barriers to its response.

Southern Tasmanian councils are responsible for billions of dollars of assets and have key regulatory roles that need to be made climate ready. It is acutely understood by local government Australia-wide of the limitations of regulations and control mechanisms, as well as the added cost, of responding to climate change. It is further understood that whilst technology plays a role in responding, what is required is a bigger picture shift of adaptive challenge that align councils across their corporate functions, service delivery and municipal boundaries to support thriving and resilient communities.

Across Australia the local government sector is already looking to collaborative and coordinated arrangements for its climate response. Regional local government led programs, under the auspice of State Governments in NSW, SA, and Victoria, are delivering local outcomes and building corporate capacity. In Tasmania the STCA, is partnering with the Greater Hobart Councils, to do likewise. It is delivering a program to build capacity and leverage expertise to create thriving and resilient communities.

Additionally, the STCA is collaborating with the north-eastern councils through a state-wide proposal on 'harmonising' council's climate action, leveraging the STCA's program and formalising reporting requirements. It has also produced a Regional Coastal Hazard Strategy that has been well received by councils.

As the role of local government continues to evolve this inevitably includes climate change. In this context climate change needs to be treated with deep uncertainty (unknowable details) and cannot and should not be treated as a risk (knowable). This requires a paradigm shift within local-government and its decision-making frameworks which are premised on knowable risks. Decision making needs to be flexible and to build resilience through evidence-based scenario analyses that help to understand uncertainty associated with novel new climates. Key to its success are collaborative and cooperative approaches that are scalable, resource efficient, avoid duplication and leverage action not only within the local government sector but across climate stakeholders in both the government and private sectors.

The FoLGR provides the opportunity for the codesign of governance and institutional structures to support thriving and resilient communities across Tasmania. To this end the STCA seeks, through the review:

- the integration of climate responses, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation that inform the governance structures going forward to engender agile and flexible decision making within the local government sector

- the co-design with the local government sector, of the integration of climate responses, is informed by council officers developing corporate and strategic responses to climate change
- mechanisms and arrangements are put in place that formalise climate resource sharing of technical expertise, and systems that are scalable to across councils to support the decision making and leverage from shared knowledge and experience.

On behalf of the southern Tasmanian councils of the STCA, we thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission. It is considered FoLGR provides an opportunity to reimagine local government to ensure it is prepared, agile, flexible, and responsive to the inevitable adapt to challenges and opportunities in a changing climate.

Please note this submission is made on behalf of the STCA Board, comprised of the Mayors and General Managers of southern Tasmanian councils and its climate change program the Regional Climate Change Initiative of which all 12 southern councils are participants. Unfortunately, the Review's consultation time frames precluded consideration for formal endorsement by individual councils

Yours sincerely



Mayor Alex Green

CHAIR
SOUTHERN TASMANIAN COUNCILS AUTHORITY



Cr Helen Burnet

CHAIR
REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE