

27 April 2022

The Hon Sue Smith AM

Chair—Local Government Board

lgboard@dpac.tas.gov.au

To the Local Government Board

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I write to you to submit the views of the West Coast Council to the current review into the future of local government. It has been pleasing to see the genuine work to engage with community and the willingness to consider local government in its complete context.

Reviewing the functions of local government is of absolute importance. There are many things that we deliver now, which may be best delivered by other levels of government, likewise there are things delivered by other levels of government that would be best delivered by us. Councils like ours are well placed to deliver services locally in a place based manner that meets our communities' specific needs and context. We are less well placed to deliver services where there is an expectation of the exact same service level across the State or country. We believe it is important for the board to consider in this space the difference between remote and urban Councils. Local government is not one sized fits all, there are things we do as a small remote Councils that urban Councils don't and vice versa. One area that remote local governments could do well if funded, is aggregate service delivery. Currently there are numerous social and community programs that run across the State, funded by different areas in the State and Commonwealth Governments. The result in remote communities, is the severe fragmentation and dislocation of services. There are over thirty service providers funded to deliver community services on the West Coast, some only here for a day, a quarter, or not at all. If that funding was aggregated through local government there would be a much higher level of local community services tailored to the needs of the community and delivered in place. The outcomes would be better.

It is important that the board not review local government without considering revenue. Currently local governments are funded regressively. Rate revenue is based on property value, this means that the LGA's with the highest wealth, have the highest ability to collect revenue and deliver services. This funding model means that the communities with the highest disadvantage have the lowest ability to raise revenue and the local government funding model will increase disadvantage and inequality overtime. The review should consider alternative revenue models or mitigations to prevent local government increasing inequality.

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There are reforms needed to support Council's to attract and retain Councillors with the skills and experience to function effectively. We would like to see reforms to the number of Councillors, and the allowances received, to ensure high quality candidates can continue to be attracted. We would also like to see more clarity in legislation of how Councillors are to balance their roles providing governance oversight to Council, being community representatives, and being planning authorities.

Yours Sincerely



Shane Pitt

MAYOR

CC: Director Local Government; CEO LGAT.

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