Interim Report: Appendices

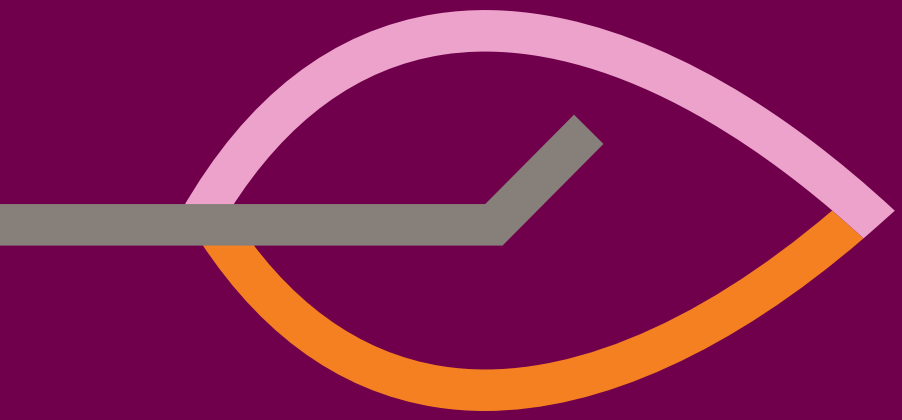
Review Stage 1 – June 2022

The future of local government review

Let's All Shape the Future of Local Government.

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Tasmanian Government



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Appendix 1: Our Stage 1 Approach

Overview

The Review is an ambitious, generational opportunity to look at the fundamentals of the local government system: the role it should play in supporting communities; the services it should be delivering; and the most effective ways of doing so. The scope of the Review is broad and forward looking, requiring the Board to adopt a structured and deliberative approach. We are conducting a genuinely open and community-driven process and have no preconceived ideas about reform outcomes. We will draw on a range of sources of evidence including expert research and analysis, community and stakeholder input, and the insights of the local government sector itself.

Stage 1 of the Review has been about discovery. Community engagement is central to this process – to understand the current state of local government and the aspirations for the sector's future, through the eyes of all Tasmanians. Stage 1 has also been about establishing the core guiding principles and other foundations necessary to ensure Tasmanians understand how the Review will be conducted and how they can participate as it progresses.

Our consultation consisted of the following core engagement opportunities::

20 POP UP EVENTS

4 SECTOR WORKSHOPS

17 STATE-WIDE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

An online survey on the role and future for local government

Local government sector engagement

A 'Host Your Own Conversation' toolkit

Written submissions and general correspondence

State Government and Parliament engagement

Consultation and Engagement

Our engagement program formally commenced on 25 February and ran until 22 May. It provided comprehensive opportunities across Tasmania to communities and stakeholders to share their experiences, ideas, and aspirations for the future of local government. We aimed to provide every Tasmanian with the opportunity to have their say and we would like to thank everyone who participated for giving up their time to share their views.

Pop up events

We ran 20 Pop Up events across Tasmania from 25 – 30 March 2022. The aim of the pop ups was to raise awareness of the Review in local communities, get community feedback on local government, and promote other engagement opportunities.

We engaged with over 600 Tasmanians through our pop-up events. The people we reached either contributed their thoughts and views on local government or were directed to other community engagement opportunities..

Sector workshops

We hosted 4 Sector workshops on 31 March and 1 April 2022 with representatives from peak organisations within relevant sectors. The forums were structured around the seven Review Themes as follows:

- Community wellbeing (24 attendees)
- Economic development and local promotion / infrastructure provision and management (16 attendees)
- Governance, accountability and representation / finance and administration (14 attendees)
- Land use planning and other regulatory services / environment (13 attendees)

The objective of the workshops was to understand from across a range of industry sectors the current role for local government in addressing the emerging challenges, risks, and opportunities facing Tasmanain businesses, communities, and the environment. The workshops also sought ideas and views from industry representatives on what the focus areas need to be for local government in the coming years.

Community workshops

We held 15 in person and two online Community workshops from 28 April – 12 May 2022. These workshops sought people's views, ideas and current understanding of local government, explored the value of local government's roles and functions and reflected on what ought to be the focus areas for local government in the coming years.

172 Tasmanians from across the State attended and participated in the Workshops. Contributions and feedback were collected via a participant workbook, to make sure we captured what every single participant had to say.

Community survey

An online Community Survey was available to the public from 18 March. The survey was also mailed to individuals on request. The survey provided participants with information on the services provided by local councils across the seven Review themes, followed by a rating scale and open-ended questions across three parts:

- Part A - Understanding what local councils do
- Part B - Exploring the service value of local councils
- Part C - Future of local councils

The survey closed on 15 May with 476 submissions.

Local government sector engagement

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) supported the Board by coordinating and delivering a range of sector engagement mechanisms, including

- two workshops (one with Mayors, one with General Managers),
- nine regional forums with elected representatives and council employees (spread across each region),
- three online sessions (including a dedicated session for the Flinders and King Island Councils), and
- an online survey for elected representatives and council staff were provided.

These mechanisms ensured that local government elected representatives and staff could participate in engagement.

"Host Your Own Conversation" toolkit

A "Host Your Own Conversation" toolkit was provided upon request to support individuals to facilitate and record conversations within their communities. The toolkit was another mechanism to support regional community groups or those with limited digital literacy to join the conversation and participate.

"I'll be participating in the campaign to ensure that rural and regional Tasmania get a voice."

Anita
Farmer, small business operator and founder of a not-for-profit organisation

Written submissions and general correspondence

Outside of the workshops and surveys, the Board also received 39 written submissions from community members, organisations and councils. Submissions covered a broad range of issues and included ideas and suggestions for how local government needs to change in the future.

State Government and Parliament engagement

We also engaged with State Government agencies, to support research and inquiry where Review themes align with agency roles and responsibilities and briefed with Members of the Tasmanian Parliament upon request.

Building interest and awareness

The Review Terms of Reference call for a broad, open Review of local government which required Tasmanians to be bold and aspirational putting forward their ideas. To maximise community participation in this early phase, the engagement program was supported by an extensive marketing campaign which ran from 19 March to 8 May 2022. The campaign consisted of targeted regional promotion of the engagement events and mechanisms, using the voices of local community members to encourage participation through a range of new and traditional media including:

- Video and image advertisements through social media (Facebook and Instagram)
- 26 quarter-page press advertisements in Tasmania's three daily newspapers (The Mercury, The Examiner and The Advocate)
- Radio advertisements across 12 regional radio stations.

We also published an online data dashboard, consolidating a wide range of publicly available data into an interactive tool, allowing the community to view and compare some of councils' key activities and functions.

The dashboard presents a community snapshot for each of the state's 29 councils, and data from the last five financial years covering:

- Finance and asset management
- Infrastructure
- Rates and revenue
- Government grants revenue
- Planning and other regulatory services
- Governance and representation
- Workforce

The dashboard will be expanded with new data to inform community discussion as we move through the Review process.

We have sent regular newsletter updates on key Review milestones and outputs to individuals who have subscribed through the Review website.

We also acknowledge that councils have both individually and collectively had an important role in building interest and participation in the Review process. Councils are deeply connected to their local communities, and we look forward to continuing to work with the sector to ensure all Tasmanian communities are involved in subsequent stages of the Review.

We commend Tasmanians for the way they have proactively engaged with the Review, and their willingness to share their bold ideas and aspirations on the future of local government throughout Stage 1. The views and experiences of Tasmanians have been extremely valuable in creating a clear robust picture of the current state of local government, which will drive Stage 2 of the Review.

"We hope our family and community develop harmoniously in the future."

Goma and Amber Kalikotey-Mowbray
Bhutanese refugees, parents and grandparents.

Supporting Research and Analysis

A critical success factor for the Review will be to ensure that the process is underpinned by robust evidence and purposeful research. This includes research targeted at exploring the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing local government in Tasmania, synthesised with feedback received through community and stakeholder engagement, to identify potential reform options to support the form and function of local government. The Stage 1 research program has been supported by our Secretariat and independent researchers.

During Stage 1, we have held eight meetings as a Board to consider and discuss a wide range of information and evidence on emerging themes and issues as they relate to the local government sector in Tasmania, drawing on existing data and analysis from the academic and grey literature. Individual Board members have taken responsibility as leads on key issues and topics to steer the direction of our inquiry.

We commissioned the University of Tasmania's Policy Exchange to prepare a series of three research papers to support our fact-finding and analysis:

- The History of Local Government in Tasmania, which discusses how local government in Tasmania has evolved to meet the needs of communities throughout the State's history and explores the lessons learnt from Tasmania's past local government reform processes.
- National and international trends in local government and their relevance to Tasmania, which outlines the varied approaches to local governance across multiple jurisdictions and contextualises them to Tasmania. Importantly, it considers the key reform trends emerging both nationally and internationally.
- Place-shaping and the future role of local government in Tasmania: evidence and options which provides an overview of the debates about the changing nature of localism and 'place' and outlines the practical implications for the future of local government. In particular, it examines how evolving ideas about place, localism, and the nature of communities can provide insights into the future roles and functions of local government in Tasmania.

These papers, along with our observations and reflections on the key messages and insights they contain, have been published on the Review website.

Appendix 2: Capire Community Engagement Report

REPORT

Future of Local Government Review

Community and Stakeholder Engagement Stage One

Engagement Outcomes Report, 7 July 2022

capire

Privacy

Capire Consulting Group and any person(s) acting on our behalf is committed to protecting privacy and personally identifiable information by meeting our responsibilities under the *Victorian Privacy Act 1988* and the *Australian Privacy Principles 2014* as well as relevant industry codes of ethics and conduct.

For the purpose of program delivery, and on behalf of our clients, we collect personal information from individuals, such as e-mail addresses, contact details, demographic data and program feedback to enable us to facilitate participation in consultation activities. We follow a strict procedure for the collection, use, disclosure, storage and destruction of personal information. Any information we collect is stored securely on our server for the duration of the program and only disclosed to our client or the program team. Written notes from consultation activities are manually transferred to our server and disposed of securely.

Comments recorded during any consultation activities are faithfully transcribed however not attributed to individuals. Diligence is taken to ensure that any comments or sensitive information does not become personally identifiable in our reporting, or at any stage of the program.

Capire operates an in-office server with security measures that include, but are not limited to, password protected access, restrictions to sensitive data and the encrypted transfer of data. For more information about the way we collect information, how we use, store and disclose information as well as our complaints procedure, please see www.capire.com.au or telephone (03) 9285 9000.

Consultation

Unless otherwise stated, all feedback documented by Capire Consulting Group and any person(s) acting on our behalf is written and/or recorded during our consultation activities.

Capire staff and associates take great care while transcribing participant feedback but cannot guarantee the accuracy of all notes. We are however confident that we capture the full range of ideas, concerns and views expressed during our consultation activities.

Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.

Definitions

The following are definitions for common terms used in the design and delivery of community engagement

COMMUNITY: The term community refers to a group of people that has something in common such as identity, behaviours, interests or values. A community often share a sense of place in a given geographical area (e.g., a country, city, town, or neighbourhood) or in virtual space through communication platforms.

STAKEHOLDER: The word stakeholder refers to individuals, groups or organisations with a stake or interest in the outcome of a decision. Stakeholders may also have the ability to influence the decision given their role or position.

ENGAGEMENT: Engagement is defined as a planned process with the purpose of working with communities and stakeholders to inform decisions, share knowledge and strengthen relationships.

AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLASSIFICATIONS: The following council type has been used throughout the report for definition and analysis:

- Urban medium (UM) councils (population 30,000 – 70,000): Clarence, Glenorchy, Hobart, Kingborough and Launceston City councils
- Urban small (US) councils (population 20,000 to 30,000): Brighton, Burnie, Central Coast, Devonport, West Tamar
- Rural agricultural very large (RAVL) councils (population 10,000 to 20,000): Derwent Valley, Huon Valley, Latrobe, Meander Valley, Northern Midlands, Sorell, Waratah-Wynyard
- Rural agricultural large (RAL) councils (population 5,000 – 10,000): Break O'Day, Circular Head, Dorset, George Town, Kentish, Southern Midlands
- Rural agricultural small and medium (RASM) councils (population under 5,000): Central Highlands, Flinders Island, Glamorgan-Spring Bay, King Island, Tasman, West Coast

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Engagement overview

The Tasmanian Future of Local Government Review (the Review) is looking at the fundamentals of the local government system: the role it should play in supporting communities, the services it should be delivering, and the most effective ways of doing so.

Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was appointed to assist in the delivery of the first stage of the Review: *Community Engagement, Evidence and Fact Finding.* The findings from this first stage will feed into the second stage: *Analysing Options* to take place from June to December 2022, with the third stage: *Recommending Solutions* occurring in 2023.

The engagement approach for the first stage has been designed to meet the following objectives:

- To give all Tasmanians an opportunity to participate in the review of local government.
- To ensure that people from all sectors and places in Tasmania are adequately involved in the review.
- To build community understanding of the value, role, and function of local government – both current and prospective.
- To build confidence in the community that their interests are being served by the Review.
- To build the Local Government Board's understanding of community experiences, perceptions, concerns, and aspirations about local government.

This section of the report provides an overview of the engagement approach undertaken by Capire, the demographics of participants, and a summary of the feedback collected from the community, peak bodies, and the local government sector.

Engagement approach

The engagement approach sought to listen, understand, and document the lived experiences of a diverse and broad range of participants. Capire designed an engagement approach that utilised both online and in-person activities including community pop-ups and workshops, an online survey, written submissions and sector forums. In addition, the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) engaged and sought feedback from their members through workshops and a survey. This approach ensured equitable and broad access for Tasmanians to provide their views and experiences on the Future of Local Government Review.

Participation

Over 1,399 people participated in at least one engagement activity. A summary of participation is outlined below.

- Capire reached over 600 people at pop-ups in 20 urban and regional locations during the initial awareness-raising phase of engagement.
- 189 individuals registered for one or more community workshops held across the state in a variety of locations; 172 people attended one of 17 workshops.

- 476 people completed the online community survey.
- Approximately 60 people from peak bodies attended the Sector Forums to discuss the specific Review Themes.
- 39 written submissions were provided to the Local Government Board from individuals, organisations and Councils.
- LGAT engaged their members, both council staff and elected representatives, in a parallel engagement process. LGAT organised:
    - Two workshops (one with mayors, one with general managers).
    - Six regional forums with elected representatives (two in each region).
    - Six regional forums with council employees (two in each region).
    - Three online sessions (including one for the Bass Strait Councils).
- Approximately 220 people participated in these sessions, with a broad range of local councils represented. Several survey responses were also provided, separate to the Capire online community survey.

For community workshop and survey participants, there was a balanced split between the number of those who lived in urban councils and those in regional councils. Urban and regional areas have been classified as per the Australian Local Government Classifications (see Definitions in preamble). Of the participants:

- 33% lived in Urban Medium (UM) councils: Clarence, Glenorchy, Hobart, Kingborough and Launceston City
- 24% were in Rural Agricultural Very Large (RAVL) councils: Derwent Valley, Huon Valley, Latrobe, Meander Valley, Northern Midlands, Sorell, Waratah-Wynyard
- 16% lived in Urban Small (US) councils: Brighton, Burnie, Central Coast, Devonport, and West Tamar
- 15% were in Rural Agricultural Small and Medium (RASM) councils: Central Highlands, Flinders Island, Glamorgan-Spring Bay, King Island, Tasman, and West Coast
- 12% lived in Rural Agricultural Large (RAL) councils: Break O'Day, Circular Head, Dorset, George Town, Kentish, and Southern Midlands.

Almost a third of participants have been living in their local area for 25 years or more (28%), and a quarter between 11 and 24 years (24%). In terms of household type almost half of participants lived as a couple without children (44%), and a further quarter lived as a couple with children (24%).

Community participants represented a broad range of ages, with the largest proportion (46%) aged between 55-74 years. There was an even representation of male (49%) and female (47%) participants.

Key findings

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed with the following key findings drawn from participant responses across all cohorts and engagement activities. The findings are

presented to demonstrate where views converged and there was consensus on key issues, and where sentiments diverged.

Convergence of views and sentiments

Across the diverse demographics and locations of participants, there were substantial areas of convergence of sentiment around several core issues and the challenges and opportunities facing local government.

Role clarity

Many community participants were surprised to learn about aspects of local governments' role and function, especially regarding the delivery of human services such as health and wellbeing services. Other areas that surprised participants included council's role in land use planning, economic development and tourism, and climate change/emergency management.

Feedback expressed the need for better role clarity as a central issue. This was raised by all stakeholder groups. It was the most frequently cited issue from the LGAT sector engagement when participants were asked 'what needs to change'. 38% of council workshop participants indicated that clarity and definition of the role of councils is the biggest area for change to better support local government in the future.

Most community participants understand that the respective roles of local councils, state government, the Commonwealth, business, and non-government organisations (NGOs) can influence services because it determines who does what, how it is done, and who funds it. However, as the different roles is not always clear, it was thought that this can lead to either service gaps or overlap and duplication.

One of the most important objectives for the Review is to clarify local government's effective role across a whole range of functions and service areas, including health services, land use planning, emergency management and economic development. Addressing the role and purpose of councils, articulating 'who does what', and making sure there are fair funding arrangements to support these functions, is a key direction found from this engagement, including from the local government sector itself. This was seen as a threshold issue that needs priority resolution if any reform emanating from this Review is to be successful.

Service delivery and consolidation

There was a broad recognition, including from local government sector participants, that greater service consolidation and/or sharing in some form is needed. When asked 'what needs to change', elected representatives and staff frequently identified consolidation and shared services as priority, second only to role clarity. In some service areas, such as economic development and land use planning, there was a strong sentiment that a coordination role is essential to avoid duplication and allow councils to focus on the things that are seen as their 'core business'.

High quality service provision at the local level is seen as crucial across all areas. However, this was expressed in a context where many participants across all cohorts understood that consolidation might be necessary in some areas to maintain or improve service quality. In this way, funding, and coordination by other levels of government were not seen as 'enemies' of locally responsive services, so long as local needs are heard and reflected in how the service is delivered 'on the ground'.

On service consolidation, there are a range of views about potential reform pathways, ranging from better coordination through to blanket amalgamations.

All community participants viewed the wide range of local council service areas as important to be delivered at the local level. Infrastructure provision and management, finance and administration and environmental management were identified as the most important service areas to be delivered by local governments. The most consistent reason given was that councils have the local knowledge to be able to deliver these services in the most responsive way.

Governance, accountability, and engagement

There was consensus across all cohorts on the need to improve the overall quality of governance, community engagement, accountability, and representation in local government.

Sector participants focused more on financial and asset management and were more likely to prioritise defining role on service areas, becoming financially sustainable, and managing regulatory responsibilities placed on them by state government.

Community members were interested in greater communication and engagement. When asked about what a great local council looks like in twenty years, participants at the community workshops frequently described local representation, community engagement and good governance. Most community workshop participants also shared a high degree of dissatisfaction (62%) with how councils were currently delivering in this area. This was often seen to be a result of the lack of “attention” that participants believed manifested in a decline in the quality of local infrastructure maintenance and service levels.

Peak body stakeholders called for improvement in community consultation standards as well as specific governance issues. These related primarily to planning authority conflicts and formalising clear role accountabilities on a range of service and regulatory areas between councils and state government.

Although there are different perspectives on current issues and challenges, good governance was seen by many participants across all cohorts as an essential enabler for sector success in the future.

Community wellbeing

Community wellbeing was seen as an area for increased focus and capacity building for the sector. There was agreement that mental health and wellbeing is an area where councils can and should do more, and where community satisfaction with service delivery was generally low.

Community participants regard local government as best positioned to address wellbeing through mental health services, cultural activities, and provision of sporting and active spaces. Community participants recognised the potential upside from better regional and state-wide coordination of both funding and delivery, so long as it still allowed for tailoring to local community needs.

The local government sector also regards community wellbeing services, especially mental health, as a key challenge it can and should respond to into the future. Peak body stakeholders in the community wellbeing sector indicate a need to improve the model of service in local government, with a greater emphasis on information and knowledge sharing and addressing what was perceived as a ‘risk-averse’ culture within council organisations.

Capacity and capability constraints

Community workshop and survey participants consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of their councils in the delivery of most service categories they were asked about. Common drivers of this sentiment were perceived capacity and capability constraints, duplication with other levels of government, and lack of necessary economies of scale.

This was reflected by the local government sector where it was cited that there were opportunities to share resources, implement shared services, and simplify operations such as Information Communications and Technology (ICT) platforms and legal service agreements within regions. The sector also reflected the desire to improve capabilities and capacity to deliver productivity gains and improve councils' ability and flexibility to adapt to changing contexts.

The exceptions to the general dissatisfaction with services expressed by community participants were in relation to waste management and emergency management, where participants valued the efficiency, reliability and responsiveness of the services they receive and support local delivery. It is noted that these services in many cases already involve or leverage regional or state-wide capabilities.

Climate change, environmental and emergency management

Climate change was identified across all cohorts as an area where councils need to both play a key role and build their capability to do so, particularly in relation to infrastructure resilience, coastal management, and land use planning decisions.

Across all cohorts, participants also expressed that local government has a role in environmental management, including in managing weeds and pests, maintaining the natural environment, and managing impacts of development on the environment and acting on climate change.

Emergency management is an area that is regarded as important for local government delivery due to local knowledge and connection to community. Community responses convey a strong level of appreciation to the role of first responders and volunteers. A local response is important for people in a crisis. However, the community also considers this to be an area where funding and coordination could and perhaps should be led by the State Government. Elected officials and local government staff see a role to play in recovery and recognise a need for appropriate resources in this space.

Infrastructure provision and strategic management

Sound infrastructure management was seen as crucial across all cohorts. Council staff were concerned about their ability to fund future requirements, and community members identified councils' capacity and capability constraints, not only in terms of funding but also strategic planning and management. Where positive views were held, they related to the value of managing and maintaining infrastructure locally to ensure timely responses to issues.

Conversely – and consistent with the broader role clarity concern – negative sentiment was in part based on a perceived lack of clear responsibility between levels of government for infrastructure. Further negative commentary was based on the perceived lack of capacity and capability of local councils to manage assets strategically. Community feedback indicated there

is a view that regional and strategic challenges are often beyond the capacity of some small and medium councils.

Waste management

Waste management was considered as extremely important to be delivered by councils. Participants cited reasons such as health and safety, environmental concerns, and felt it was a core council responsibility. There were suggested improvements to waste management, including reducing waste charges for smaller households, improving recycling, and eliminating waste going to landfill.

Divergence of views and sentiments

Consensus on issues, challenges and opportunities did not always extend to agreement on the potential solutions, and this also varied across the different themes.

Land use planning

Divergence was strongest on known 'hot button' issues like land use planning. On the one hand, there is the desire for consistency and efficiency for stakeholders like developers in land use planning. It was felt that these can contrast with the perceived need by some stakeholders for a local 'veto power' where projects might negatively impact local residents. In this example, role clarity – and the resolution of role conflict – was again seen as a critical threshold issue.

For many community participants, local government's role in delivering land use planning is important to ensure local knowledge and local representation is applied to decisions. Local voice on development is seen to be of critical importance. A lack of technical expertise and objectivity of elected representatives was also a frequently cited reason for negative sentiments. Further, the local government sector itself also rated land use planning as an area needing significant change.

Economic development

Economic development and local promotion were generally rated by community participants as the least important service area for local government. Many communities see activities such as the promotion of tourism as important. However, many others share concerns about balancing the needs of tourists, locals, and the environment. Drivers of dissatisfaction include a perceived lack of strategic vision for economic development and a perception that councils should focus on core service areas (i.e., the traditional "roads, rates, and rubbish").

Across community survey and workshop participants, there are concerns about the conflict in economic development role of council and responsibility in land use planning decisions. For example, where the proponent of a development is the local government itself. Overall, the community felt this area could be better served at the state level with appropriate funding and coordination.

Peak body stakeholders seek greater clarity on what role local government should play in driving economic prosperity. Stakeholders questioned how local governments might attract and retain skilled workforces (particularly in the regions).

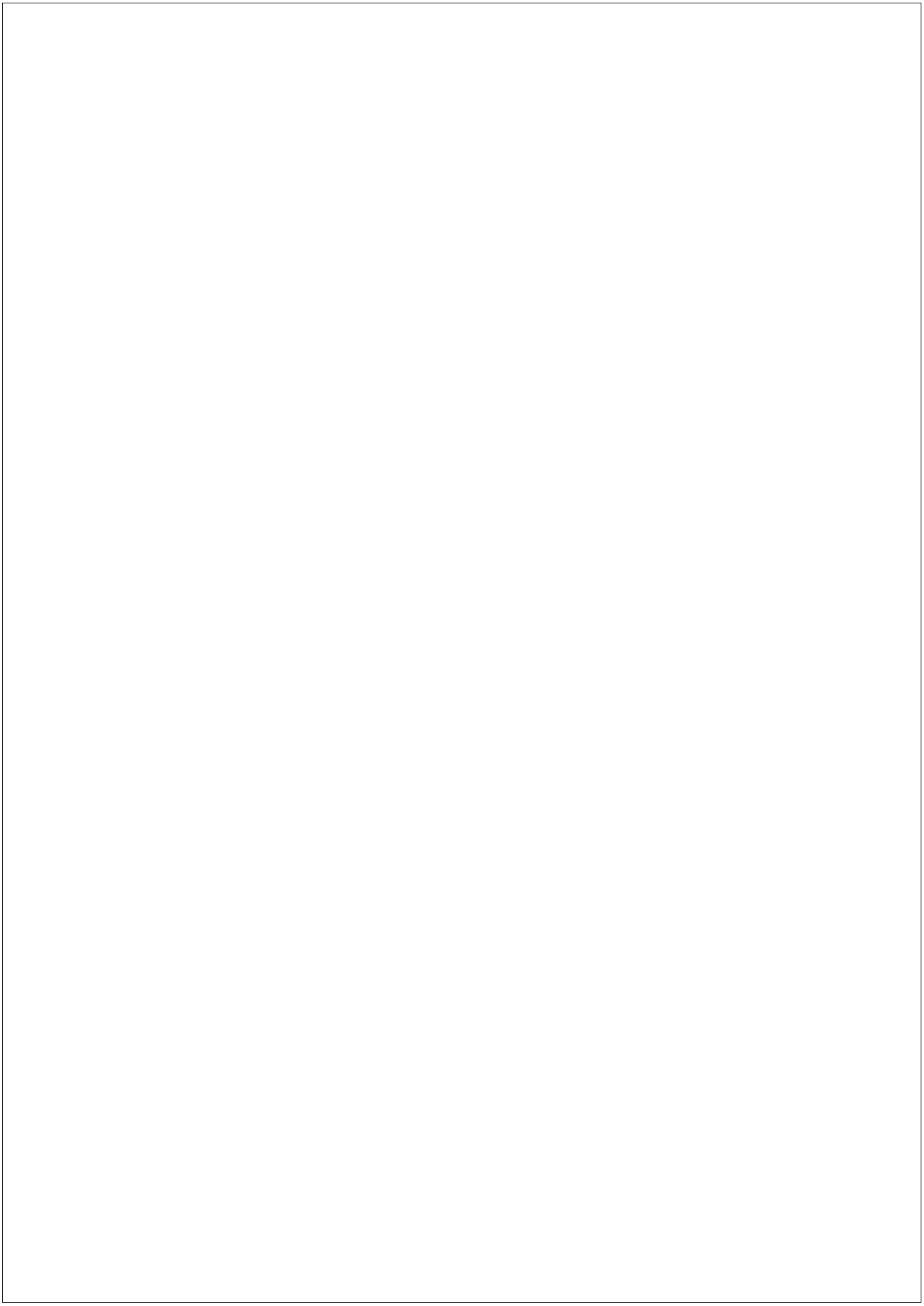
Economic development was less frequently discussed as an area of focus by the local government sector itself. This potentially implies there is an appetite to explore alternative models of delivery.

Key focus areas for local councils in the coming years

- Across all cohorts, when asked what local government should focus on in the coming years, the top three areas include: climate change and environment, human services, and service delivery.
- For community participants who attended workshops, the top three areas include: service delivery, climate change and environment and human services.
- For community participants who completed surveys, the top three areas are: climate change and environment, human services, and land use planning.
- For local government elected representatives and staff, the top three areas are: climate change and environment, defining its role and human services.

Next steps

The Local Government Board will explore and test a range of options through the publication of discussion papers and holding targeted workshops and meetings in the second stage of the Review, scheduled for July – December 2022.



1 Introduction

1.1 Report purpose

Capire Consulting Group was appointed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet to design, deliver and report on the first stage of community engagement as part of the 18-month Tasmanian Future of Local Government Review (the 'Review').

This report presents the outcome of engagement with community and stakeholders who participated in this stage of engagement including through visiting pop-ups, attending workshops, and completing the online survey from March to May 2022. In addition, a conversation toolkit was made available for any individual or community group to host their own conversation and make a submission.

The report also includes feedback received through consultation undertaken with peak body stakeholders through a series of Review Theme forums, and engagement with the local government sector, employees, and elected representatives, through a survey and workshops undertaken by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT).

An analysis of the engagement findings from the first stage of the Review provides an understanding of how different communities in Tasmania view local government, and what they would like to see in the future. This analysis can be used to provide evidence, support, and guidance to the Local Government Board on potential areas of reform.

1.2 Project background

The Tasmanian Government commissioned the Local Government Board to undertake a Review of the role, function, and design of local government in Tasmania.

The Review is looking at the fundamentals of the local government system: the role it should play in supporting communities, the services it should be delivering, and the most effective ways of doing so.

At the end of the Review, the Board will recommend to the State Government the reforms it believes are needed. The end goal is to deliver a local government sector that can meet the challenges and opportunities that Tasmanians will face in the coming decades.

The first stage of community engagement sought to understand community and stakeholder expectations for Tasmania's local government sector. These will inform options for the future role and functions of local government; and what is the best way to design local government to support community wellbeing and maximise social and economic outcomes locally, regionally, and state-wide.

2 Engagement approach

2.1 Engagement purpose

Future of Local Government Review Community Engagement – Staged approach

Community engagement will occur in three distinct stages that match the three, six-month periods of the review.

Figure 1: Future of Local Government Review Stages

Stage One: Community engagement and fact-finding (January to June 2022)

The first stage of engagement sought to understand community and stakeholder views and expectations for Tasmania's local government sector. The steps undertaken included:

- publishing information on the terms of reference and scope of the review (January 2022)
- communicating with all councils to seek data, issues, and priorities, communicate across the state the opportunity for everyday citizens to get involved (March to April 2022)
- establishing the online platform for engagement throughout the review lifecycle (March 2022) engage.futurelocal.tas.gov.au/
- undertaking a comprehensive series of community workshops, sector forums and running an online community survey to understand the community's priorities, issues and ideas (March - May 2022)
- analysing and synthesising community and stakeholder feedback into a report to the Government Board (by 30 June 2022).

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) hosted a parallel process with elected representatives and staff that was completed in parallel and with reference to the broader community process.

Stage Two: Exploring and testing options (July to December 2022)

The second stage will explore and test options through the publication of discussion papers and seek feedback through targeted workshops and meetings.

Stage Three: Recommending solutions (January to June 2023 and beyond)

The third stage will present recommended solutions and the publication of the final report of the Local Government Board.

Stage one engagement objectives

Engagement has been designed to meet the following objectives.

- To give all Tasmanians an opportunity to participate in the review of local government.
- To ensure that people from all sectors and places in Tasmania are adequately involved in the review.
- To build community understanding of the value, role, and function of local government – both current and prospective.
- To build confidence in the community that their interests are being served by the review.
- To build the Local Government Board's understanding of community experiences, perceptions, concerns, and aspirations about local government.

2.2 Communication approach

The opportunity to get involved in stage one was promoted through a range of online, print and 'at place' platforms, outlined below.

- **Advertisements in local newspapers:** Two rounds of quarter page printed advertisements were published in each of the three major newspapers; the Mercury, Examiner and Advocate. The first round was to promote the location of the pop-ups, and the second was to promote the online survey and workshops.
- **Digital campaign via Facebook:** Overall there were 10,247 link clicks during the digital campaign that ran between 19 March – 8 May 2022. Two sub-campaigns focused on promoting the pop-up and workshop locations and were targeted to the immediate surrounding areas. There were three sub-campaigns focused on promoting the online survey and online workshops, optimised to generate traffic to the engagement website.
- **Pop ups 'at place':** The engagement team visited 20 towns across Tasmania in March 2022 to promote the review and enrol local residents in future workshops. The team also recorded a small amount of feedback and distributed badges and postcards in the various towns visited. A brief report was provided to the Local Government Board on what was heard from local communities during the pop ups. See **Appendix B** for a high-level summary of feedback.
- **Radio advertising: A** 30 second radio advert was broadcast across 12 regional radio stations, ensuring state-wide promotion with a focus on promoting the workshops.
- **Direct emails and phone calls to community groups and networks**: The engagement team identified a comprehensive list of local community organisations and

networks[1], and contacts from councils. An email promoting the engagement opportunities and online engagement page was sent in the first instance, with subsequent follow up phone calls to areas with low workshop registration.

2.3 Engagement limitations

While every effort was made to promote and engage as broadly as possible there were some limitations and constraints that challenged the engagement process, namely:

- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may have resulted in stakeholder hesitation to attend in-person events. Illnesses may have also impacted attendance.
- Not all individuals or cohorts have access to digital platforms and, as such, this may have limited capacity for some groups to find out about the project and provide their feedback.
- The online survey and community workshops included qualitative, open text questions which allowed respondents to answer questions in their own words. Some interpretation of responses was required to analyse and theme the engagement findings.
- To encourage further conversations in the community, a conversation toolkit was made available to enable community leaders and organised groups to host a structured conversation and make an additional submission. This was promoted via the online engagement website and hard copies distributed at community workshops. However, no toolkit submissions have been received to date.
- The latter part of the public engagement period coincided with the federal election campaign. This was not known at the time of designing and scheduling engagement activities such as community workshops.
- While Capire has reported on information documented by participants and interpreted the information to represent the views of participants as closely as possible, Capire cannot guarantee the quality of participant data.
- Data from the various engagement activities was collected in different ways. While every effort was made to find alignment, different data collection methods can influence the way data is interpreted.

2.4 Participation

Over 1,399 people participated in at least one engagement activity. A summary of participation is outlined below.

- Capire reached over 600 people at pop-ups in 20 urban and regional locations during the initial awareness-raising phase of engagement.

[1] Identified through the following website directories: www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Tasmania and tascoss.org.au/for-tasmanians/findhelptas/

- 189 individuals registered for one or more community workshops held across the state in a variety of locations; 172 people attended one of 17 workshops. See Appendix D for workshop schedule.
- 476 people completed the online community survey.
- Approximately 60 people from peak bodies attended the Sector Forums to discuss the specific Review Themes.
- 39 written submissions were provided to the Local Government Board.
- LGAT engaged their members, both council staff and elected representatives, in a parallel engagement process. LGAT organised:
    - Two workshops (one with mayors, one with general managers).
    - Six regional forums with elected representatives (two in each region).
    - Six regional forums with council employees (two in each region).
    - Three online sessions (including one for the Bass Strait Councils).
- Approximately 220 people participated in these sessions, with a broad range of local councils represented. Several survey responses were also provided, separate to the Capire online community survey. See Appendix E for workshop schedule.

For community workshop and survey participants, there was a balanced split between the number of those who lived in urban councils and those in regional councils. Urban and regional areas have been classified as per the Australian Local Government Classifications (see Definitions in preamble). Of the participants:

- 33% lived in Urban Medium (UM) councils: Clarence, Glenorchy, Hobart, Kingborough and Launceston City
- 24% were in Rural Agricultural Very Large (RAVL) councils: Derwent Valley, Huon Valley, Latrobe, Meander Valley, Northern Midlands, Sorell, Waratah-Wynyard
- 16% lived in Urban Small (US) councils: Brighton, Burnie, Central Coast, Devonport, and West Tamar
- 15% were in Rural Agricultural Small and Medium (RASM) councils: Central Highlands, Flinders Island, Glamorgan-Spring Bay, King Island, Tasman, and West Coast
- 12% lived in Rural Agricultural Large (RAL) councils: Break O'Day, Circular Head, Dorset, George Town, Kentish, and Southern Midlands.

Almost a third of participants have been living in their local area for 25 years or more (28%), and a quarter between 11 and 24 years (24%). In terms of household type almost half of participants lived as a couple without children (44%), and a further quarter lived as a couple with children (24%).

Community participants represented a broad range of ages, with the largest proportion (46%) aged between 55-74 years. There was an even representation of male (49%) and female (47%) participants. Further details of the demographics of the community participants can be found in Appendix A.

3 Engagement findings: Community

This section presents the findings from the community survey and workshops. In the surveys and the workshops, the participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What is valued by the community and issues to be addressed?
- What understanding is there of local council's role?
- How important is it that Council delivers the service or activity?
- What is working well, and not working well – and why?
- What are the key focus areas in the coming years? and
- What does a great council local council look like, 20 years from now?

3.1 Overall key findings

The following key findings are drawn from participant responses across all community engagement activities – pop-ups, workshops and surveys.

3.2 Issues and values

The issues that matter to workshop participants provided an early insight into what matters to local communities more broadly. The figure below shows the main issues raised as consolidation (including amalgamations) and opportunities for shared services and efficiencies (22%), concerns around governance (transparency, accountability and decision making) (15%), local representation (10%) and land use planning issues (9%).

Whilst comments for and against council consolidation were raised by many and was a strong theme in workshops, this did not dominate discussions. The early identification of issues aligns with workshop discussions on how local government can be accountable, efficient and represent local communities on what matters to them.

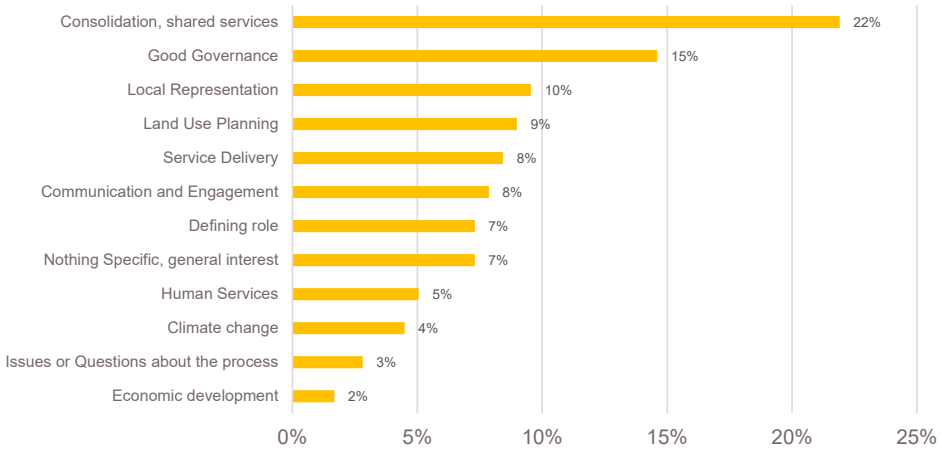


Figure 2: Number of issues mentioned by respondents to the pre-workshop question (n=178)

Survey respondents were asked what they love most about where they live, providing an insight into what communities value about their local area and community.

Lifestyle (29%), community wellbeing (20%) and proximity to services and the natural environment (17%) were the most common themes. Climate and environment, as well as opportunities for tourism and local employment were also commonly cited. These values align with those survey responses which related to what the community would like to see maintained or improved for the future such as land use planning, climate change and human services.

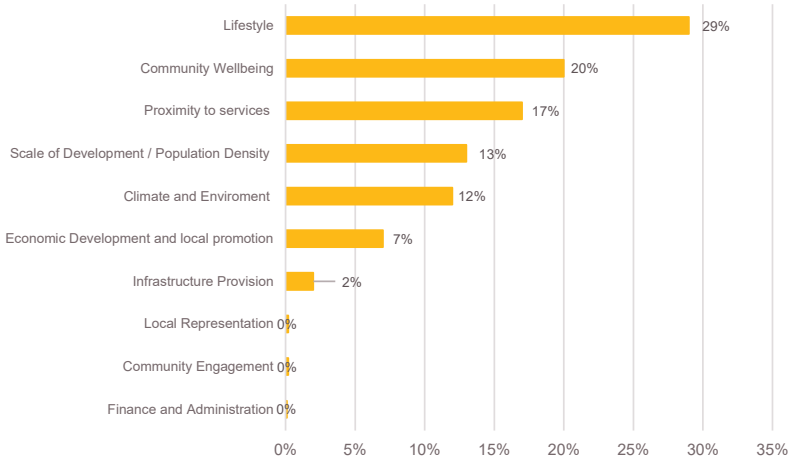


Figure 3: Response to the question 'What do you love most about where you live?' (n=459)

3.3 Understanding local government role and functions

Reflecting on information provided on the role and function of local councils, participants were asked if anything surprised them. Of those who provided a response, the majority said 'No', they were not surprised, with survey respondents indicating they had a stronger understanding council's role (53%) than workshop participants (43%). This may be due to participants being generally highly engaged community members with close knowledge of councils and their respective functions.

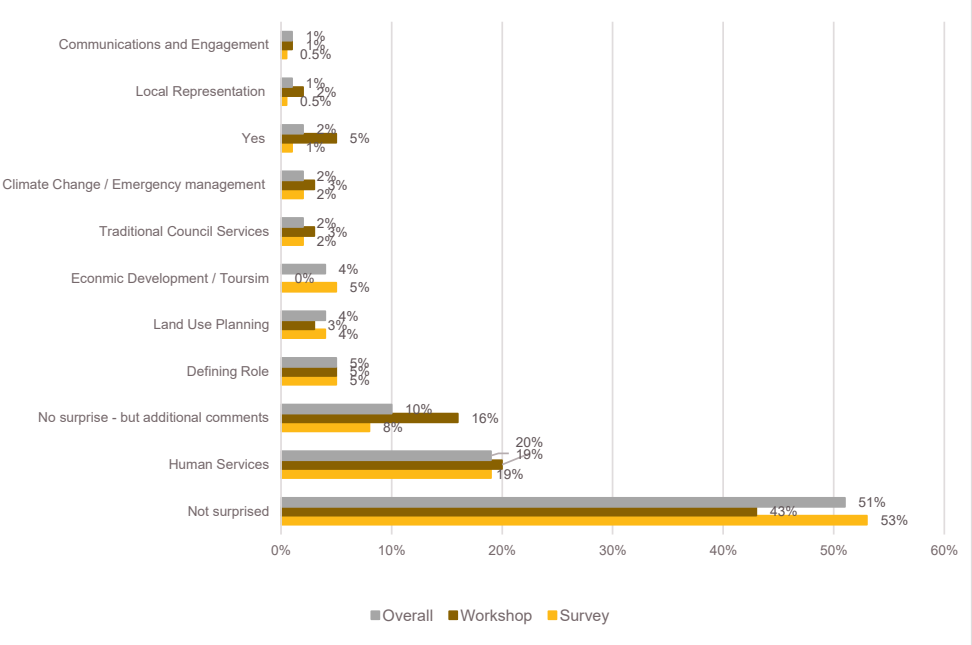


Figure 4: Response to the question 'Based on the range of local council services and functions, did anything surprise you? n=533

Surprising

Respondents who were surprised by the range of services highlighted community wellbeing (human services) functions such as immunisation and childcare as well as health and safety responsibilities. Some comments also expressed surprise at the revenue and funding for councils.

Most participants were not surprised with council's delivery of sports, communications or community engagement, and local representation. Quotes from participants have been included below to illustrate sentiment.

- *'Surprised by the broad range of services that the council is supposed to supply and support.'* (Huonville workshop participant)
- *'I was surprised by most of the services provided. It's a far cry from the traditional notion of the '3R's'. It is a lot of responsibility for a possibly small, poorly funded council to assume (e.g., rural councils)'* (Hobart workshop participant)

- *'I am at a loss as to why they provide childcare and health service. This can never be a special service at a local government level- no expertise.'* (Survey respondent, RAVL council)

Additional Sentiment

Several respondents expressed that these services are rarely delivered or adhered to or should be determined based on the needs of the area. Participants believed a reason for these services not being delivered may be due to the lack of funding or support for councils. Others also suggested that councils are doing services that could be provided by the State Government or the private sector.

- *'Councils still running historically important services, that could be covered by the private/state governments i.e. vaccination.'* (Hobart workshop participant).
- *'Lots of responsibilities and possible incorrect funding model. The sector that has 80% of infrastructure: 3.5% of funding is a mismatch. We need asset management. They depend on grants. It is grossly underfunded.'* (Kingston resident, online workshop)
- *'Not surprised but it's one thing to be responsible for a service and another to do it well*.' (survey respondent, Urban Small Council)

3.4 Importance of local government in delivering services

Participants were asked 'How important is it that the following services and activities are delivered by your local council?', with 1 being the least important, and 5 being extremely important. They were also asked to provide a reason for their response. Figure 5 below shows the average rating for each service area across survey and workshop respondents.

In general, respondents considered it important that all the services listed are delivered by their local council. The average range was from 3.53 (Emergency management, workshop respondents) to 4.44 (Infrastructure provision and management, survey respondents).

While all service areas and functions were rated as important, reasons given for the response provided insight into why that is the case. This involved areas like 'Infrastructure provision' and 'Finance and administration' seen as a core service, whereas sentiments around 'Economic development' and 'Emergency management' included that local knowledge was needed, however a regional or state-wide coordination and funding would be beneficial.

Figure 5: Average 'importance' rating of local council service areas (n = 595)

The figures below detail the average importance rating of services by category and by collection method respectively. Each community contribution was weighted equally, regardless of method.

Workshop participants viewed all services as more important than survey participants. The greatest variance was in Land use planning and other regulatory services, with an average of 4.5 from workshop participants, and 4 from survey participants. There was varying degrees of unanimity and variance regarding the importance of services across Council categories. The average importance from all council categories for Community wellbeing was 4, or 4.1.

The greatest variation of importance was in Economic development and local promotion. Urban Medium (UM) respondents tended to view this service as significantly less important (3.4) than respondents from Urban Small (US) councils (4.1). UM respondents also rated Emergency management significantly less important (3.5), a sentiment shared by US Councils (3.7), whereas respondents from RAL councils rated higher (4.2), demonstrating a difference between urban and regional areas when it comes to the emergency management.

RAL respondents viewed Finance and Administration (4.6), Infrastructure Provision and Management (4.6), Land Use Planning (4.3), and Emergency Management (4.2), and Community Wellbeing (4.2) as more important than other Council categories. In contrast, participants from smaller regional (RASM) councils view Environment (4.0), Finance and Administration (4.2), Infrastructure provision (4.3), and Land Use Planning (3.9), as less important than the respective average importance for those services.

Despite the high level of importance afforded to the delivery of all services by Council, there is a degree of regional variance specific to each service area as demonstrated in Figure 6.

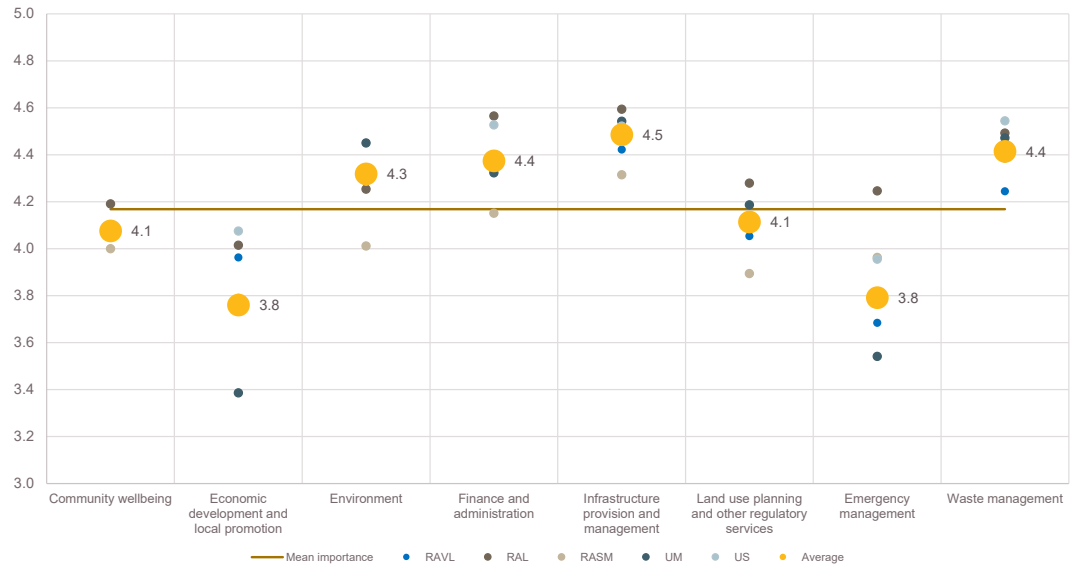


Figure 6: Comparative 'importance' rating of local council service areas (n = 595)

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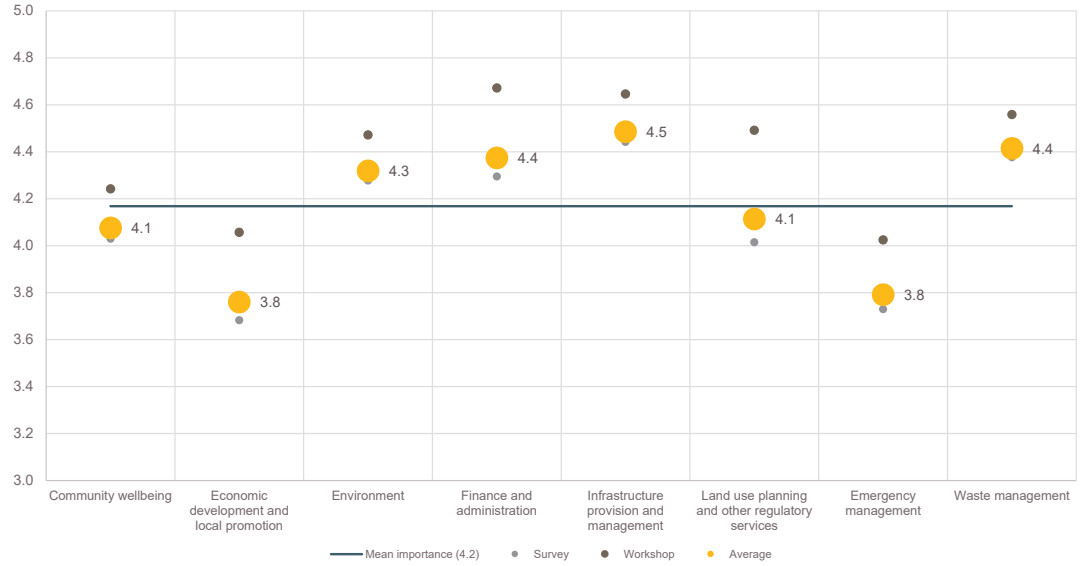

Figure 7: Comparative 'importance' rating by feedback collection method (n = 595)

Importance by council service area

The following is a summary of responses from each council service area, across both survey and workshop feedback.

Infrastructure Provision and Management

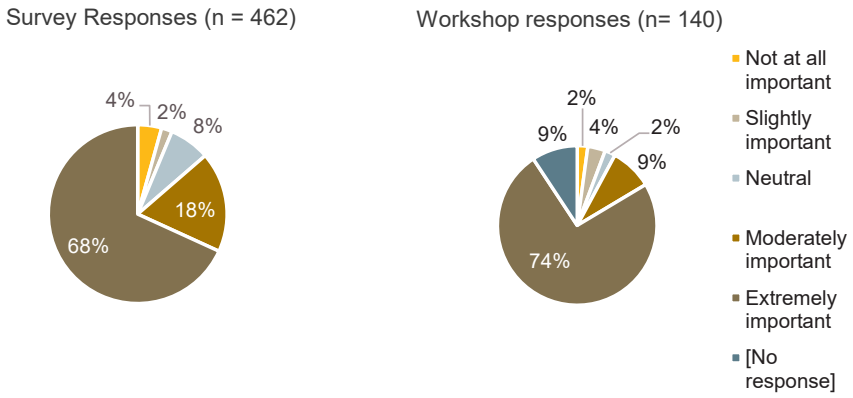

Figure 8: Rating of importance that Infrastructure provision and management is delivered by local councils

Most participants believed it is extremely important that the provision and management of infrastructure be delivered by local councils. Workshop participants rated this higher (74%) than survey respondents (68%). Participants cited reasons such as local knowledge, council responsiveness, and ease of communication.

Many comments cited infrastructure provision and management as central to local council responsibilities. This is in part because local communities engage with these services frequently and can monitor and communicate to their local councils when faults occur or maintenance is required.

- *'Often these jobs will be brought to the attention of local council by members of the area. Therefore having local council maintain these ensures that issues are able to be attended to in a timely manner.'* (Railton survey respondent)
- *These things are important to keep LGA's useable for residents. Local knowledge. Need support in emergencies/disasters.* (New Norfolk workshop participant)

Participants expressed the need for role clarity in areas such as road management, to delineate between state and local roads. This is paired with sentiments that, while infrastructure management should be delivered by local councils, there are opportunities for greater shared responsibility– whether across and between councils, or with state government.

- *'These services are vital for the safety of the community. My concern is that council's may be finding these huge issues difficult to manage.'* (Bellerive Bluff survey respondent)

- *'Sound asset planning, development and management is extremely vital for communities and should be completed through collaborative approaches with other levels of government, in consultation with the community and where possible with the view of shared service provision with other councils.'* (Longford survey respondent)

Participants who did not view infrastructure provision and management as important for councils to deliver cited dissatisfaction with current maintenance levels, or that it should be a State Government responsibility. Others expressed concern about whether local councils have the expertise and resources to fund, execute and maintain infrastructure projects.

- *'This should also be able to be managed statewide, as long as the state body ensures they do not forget about regional areas and don't focus spending purely on the high population areas.'* (Midway Point survey respondent)
- *'Needs a more strategic overview on infrastructure from state/regional viewpoint'* (New Norfolk workshop participant).

Waste Management

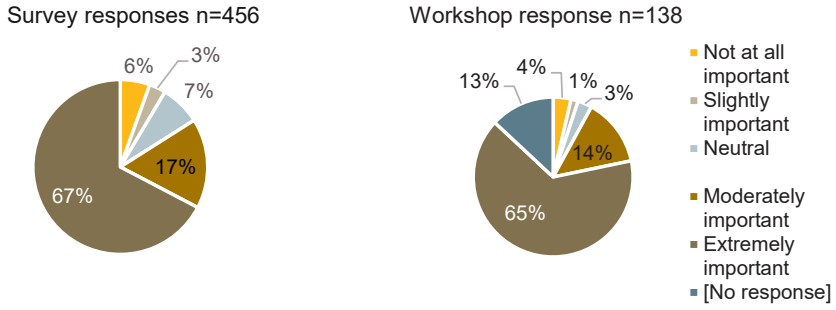

Figure 9: Rating of importance that council's deliver Waste management

The majority of participants from both survey (67%) and workshop responses (65%) considered waste management as extremely important to be delivered by the local council. Participants cited reasons such as health and safety, environmental concerns, and that it is a core council responsibility. Some comments suggested improvements to waste management, including reducing waste charges for smaller households, improving recycling, and eliminating waste going to landfill.

- *'Ensures risk mitigation against health issues and a clean environment within the community'* (Launceston workshop participant)
- *'As long as it's done and accountability is upheld/community knows where to complain/give feedback'* (Campbell Town workshop participant).
- *'It is the responsibility of the council to keep the community safe and healthy and waste management etc is a very important service that must be updated all the time.'* (Sorell survey respondent)

Participants who did not view the delivery of this service by councils as important believed a state-wide approach may be more suitable. Some respondents noted that waste management

services could be delivered by contractors instead, with councils acting as an overseer. it was further noted that waste management could be managed regionally to avoid duplication between local government areas.

- *'Council main role is coordinating collection contract with private providers'* (Launceston workshop participant).
- *'A regional perspective rather than individual focus'* (Devonport workshop participant)
- *'This is of course an important role, but there is also room for a statewide approach and not something that must or should necessarily be done at a local level.'* (Blackman's Bay survey respondent)

Finance and Administration

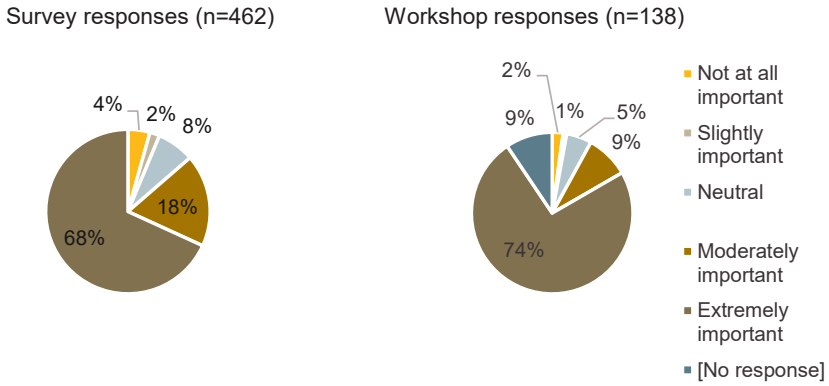

Figure 10: Rating of importance that council's deliver Finance and Administration services

The majority of respondents believe that finance and administration is an extremely important function of local councils, with workshop participants rating this higher (74%) than survey respondents (68%). Participants that believe the delivery of this service is important cited reasons such as local knowledge, and responsiveness.

Respondents commented that local councils are better positioned to be responsive to change. Many believed finance and administration is reflective of a well-coordinated council and that this responsibility would help ensure that councils remain accountable. Workforce management was also regarded as important as it helps to foster strong relationships between council and its constituents, but challenges for small councils in attracting and retaining staff were flagged.

- *'This is the largest responsibility of council but should not be controlled in such a way that it is detrimental to the growth and development of the district. (Stanley survey respondent)*
- *'Critical mass is really important to Council capacity; too small lacks depth for a sustainable + effective organisation'* (Huonville workshop participant)

A few respondents also expressed alternative ways to fund and resource councils. These include sharing resources between councils, lowering administration costs, funding councils per

capita, or through performance metrics and revising how land taxes are calculated. Feedback indicated the possibility of centralising rates and administration while maintaining local staff.

- *'Administration and rates could be centralised but the council workforce needs to be local and managed locally'* (Nubeena workshop participant)
- *'Rates should be administered by - govt and distributed to councils on performance and satisfactory activities. The number of councils worth money x ignoring public interest is rampant'* (Swansea workshop participant)

The smaller number of participants who did not view this as important cited institutional capacity and role duplication across governments.

- *'Council admin staff are not skilled to do this. They lack the experience of what good administration looks like - Tasmania lacks the number of people to have the skill sets to cover all of the positions required - hence the need to amalgamate.'* (Lindisfarne survey respondent)
- *'These are activities that are duplicated across all Councils and there is no value to the ratepayers in these functions being performed locally. Significant economies of scale are possible and sensible from having fewer Councils covering larger areas.'* (Relbia survey respondent)

Environmental management

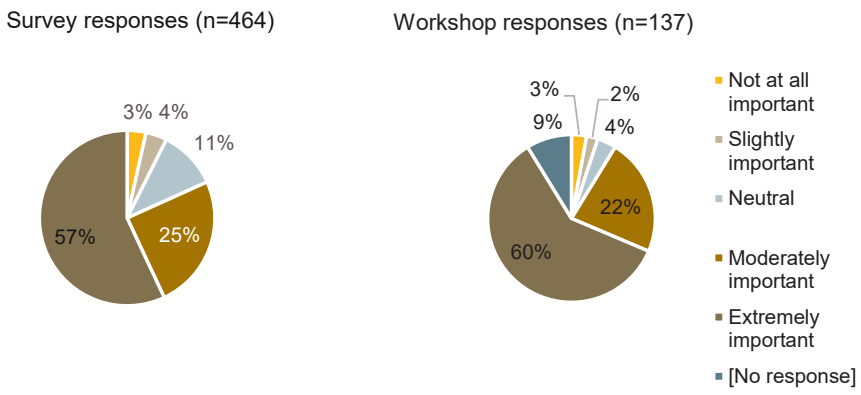

Figure 11: Rating of importance that council's provide environmental management

Over half of participants considered it extremely important that environmental management be delivered by councils, with a similar response across both survey (57%) and workshops (60%).

Respondents elaborated on the importance of managing weeds and pests at the local level, maintaining the natural environment, and the role council can play to manage impacts from development, tourism, and future planning. Feedback also indicated that more community input into how councils manage the environment is needed.

- *'As land managers councils have an important role in managing weeds and pests and maintaining natural values' (Launceston workshop participant).*

- *'Keeps the environment healthy and being aware of local problems'. (Hobart workshop participant)*

The overall sentiment regarding the importance of environmental protection is tied to many participants' beliefs in the crucial role of local-based volunteers and community groups in addressing these issues in co-operation with local government.

- *'Local Government has a unique position of being able to actively work to improve the local environment through the provision of green spaces, and by managing pests and weeds. Without Local Governments performing these services there is no other body or department which could.' (Location unspecified survey respondent)*

Participants often considered their environment as tied to other council functions, for example land use planning and tourism.

- *'The environment, both the built environment and natural environment, both contribute to people's wellbeing. Tourists come to Tasmania because of its natural wonders, whatever can be done at the local level – e.g. conservation including weed management and revegetation - is vital, because it is at the local level that needs can be best assessed and met.' (Turner's Beach survey respondent)*

Participants who did not believe this was important believed a more state-wide coordinated approach would be beneficial, or that other state-level bodies are better positioned to address environmental concerns based on capabilities or funding.

- *'I am not convinced that this is an area of importance to local government. Other bodies are managing these areas far better than local councils within the state of Tasmania. There are many nature conservation organisations across the state that have this as their focus of attention rather than councils. Parks and Wildlife Service also are active in these areas of endeavour and although not perfect, the whole array of organisations across the state probably provide a better service in these areas so that local government need not spread itself so thin to be all things to all people.' (St Helen's survey respondent)*
- *'It should be a state-wide and federal responsibility co-ordinating with local Landcare groups.' (Dolphin Sands survey respondent)*

Multiple respondents highlighted how other groups are already responsible for managing the environment, or ought to be held responsible. These groups include the State Government (as owners of Crown Land), private landowners and the public. Other volunteer groups, such as Landcare, or State Government functions such as Natural Resource Management (NRM), have been noted for their ability to provide environmental management on a regional scale.

- *'Councils generally have shown an inability to cope with NRM issues; the regional groups do it better' (Campbell Town workshop participant).*
- *'This shouldn't rest entirely on the council's shoulders. rate payers more responsibility will help them appreciate the environment more' (St Helen's workshop participant).*

Community Wellbeing

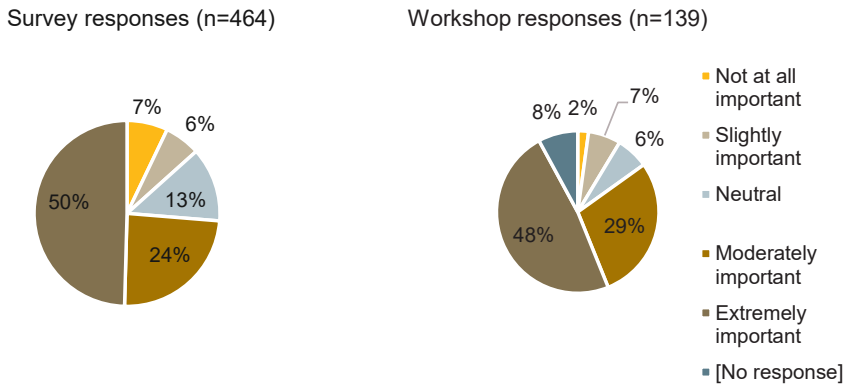

Figure 12: Rating of importance that council's deliver Community Wellbeing

Almost half of respondents thought that community wellbeing was extremely important with a fairly equal response from survey (50%) and workshop (48%) respondents. Comments highlighted how important community wellbeing and mental health was for the community. Feedback elaborated on how local knowledge is important to ensure community services in the area are delivered appropriately.

Other comments highlighted support services that the community need, such as mental health, domestic violence support, as well as youth and cultural activities. Multiple participants highlighted the need for more primary care services, such as general practitioners.

- *'Community wellbeing and mental health are very important given the previous two years. I am not aware of any direct investment by our council to these programs'* (Campbell Town workshop participant).
- *'Local knowledge, human contact is important at a local level to ensure good community service in this area'* (Swansea workshop participant).

Participants believe councils are best positioned to address community wellbeing as they are closer to the needs of their local communities and are best poised to address their respective contexts. Participants that believe the delivery of this service is important cited reasons such as ageing, community health, and local representation.

- *'A council is best placed to deliver locally tailored cultural activities and programs, as it understands the community better than higher levels of government.'* (Primrose Sands survey respondent)
- *'Because residents can more easily make representation to local council than to higher echelons of government.'* (West Launceston survey respondent)

Participants who did not view Council's delivery of these services important cited disagreement with government involvement in wellbeing or viewed it outside of Council's remit. Some also believed that Council rates should not fund these well-being activities, or that it would create inequality depending on the population of different councils.

- *'This should be a state-run project, as the amount of community activities provided shouldn't be determined by the number of rate payers or your elected or employed*

persons. It seems like a huge duplication when activities are conducted by all the councils? What a waste of time and money.' (Somerset survey respondent)

Land use planning and other regulatory services

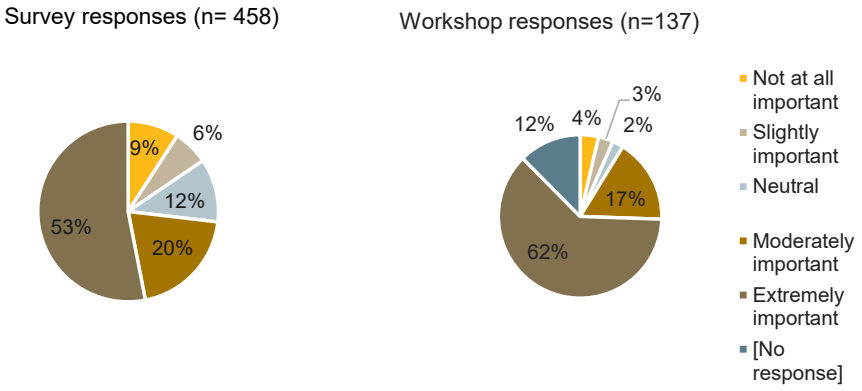

Figure 13: Rating of importance that Land Use Planning is delivered by local councils

Over half of the participants believed it is extremely important that land use planning functions are delivered by local councils. There was a slightly higher proportion of workshop participants (62%) who believed this compared to survey respondents (53%). Participants that believe the delivery of this function is important cited reasons such as local knowledge of context, responsiveness, and ease of communication.

Participants referenced the importance of local and community-based knowledge as being fundamental to understanding heritage designation and protection. Further to this, responses related to regulation believe local councils can act more responsively to community needs compared to other government bodies.

- *'Local governments really understand local areas and their needs when it comes to planning and heritage protection. It is important for unique local built environment to be protected and administered by people who live in the same community.'* (Primrose Sands survey respondent)
- *'It is critically important that land-use planning is place based. However, councils must be resourced or incentivised to take a much more strategic approach. Building and food safety is predominantly about enforcing statewide legislation, so perhaps doesn't need to be delivered by councils.'* (Central Coast survey respondent)

Others noted that some functions were essentially State Government responsibilities, such as the implementation of a state-wide planning scheme, some food safety, and building regulations. However, some expressed a view that development deemed suitable for urban areas may not be acceptable in regional areas, and that the community's right to object must be preserved.

- *'Councils are now irrelevant in planning now [that] the Tasmanian planning scheme is in place. Building services are inefficient in their current structure' (Burnie workshop participant)*
- *'Oversight needed by planning authority and heritage classification - must not rely on council's say-so, preference entirely. Preserve community members right to object' (Launceston workshop participant)*

Participants who did not consider this an important function of local council believed that a unified state model would be more suitable to Tasmania. Some concerns were also raised regarding the ability of local council officer or elected officials in making planning decisions related to their own communities.

- *'State government planning scheme should cover the entire state. Not individual local governments having their own differing rules and red tape.'* (Bicheno survey respondent)
- *'Alderman are not expert at planning matters. They should not have the power to make many decisions on all the items listed. Transparency needed'* (Nubeena workshop participant)

Emergency Management

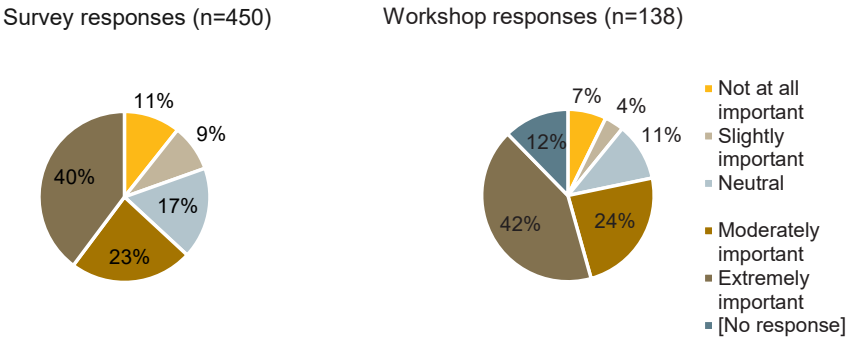

Figure 14: Rating of importance that council's deliver Emergency management

A large proportion of respondents indicated that emergency management was either extremely (40-42%) or moderately important (23-24%) as a service of council. Participants that believe the delivery of this service is important cited reasons such as local knowledge of context, and connection to community groups.

SES volunteer members as being community members was raised as an important factor, as these volunteers are often local residents with intimate knowledge of their communities.

The responsiveness of councils was also considered in response to their responses of community facilities and infrastructures.

- *'With the increasing number of extreme weather events, Council is well placed with on the ground knowledge of the local area to provide coordinated and targeted support for these services.'* (Lucaston survey respondent)
- *'Needs to be close enough to act quickly - relies on volunteers with big sense of community, e.g. recent search for missing toddler'* (Nubeena workshop participant).

Other respondents suggested that emergency services functions could be better managed at state level, with support locally through volunteer groups and councils, in particular in planning a unified co-ordination, or providing a high level of support.

- *'This needs to be linked to state coordination with local councils who understand the community'* (St Helens workshop participant).
- *'Surely SES volunteer units should come under the relevant government department as does the rural fire volunteer units. Councils would have a role in supporting them, but the main support should come from the government departments.'* (Wilmot survey respondent)

Economic development and local promotion

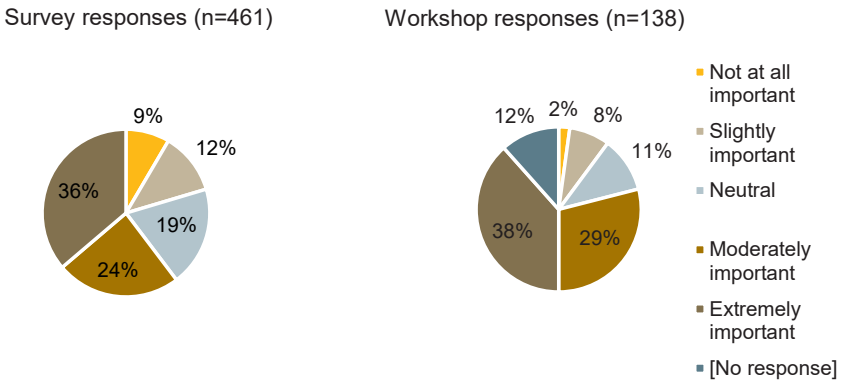

Figure 15: Rating of importance that council's deliver Economic development and local promotion

A large proportion of responses considered economic development and local promotion as extremely important (36-38%). Participants that believe the delivery of this service is important detailed reasons such as local natural and tourist assets, advocacy for local communities, and promotion of a local economy.

Respondents noted opportunities brought on by tourism. However, some also noted the need to balance tourism development, environmental sustainability, and the amenity of the local community. Respondents expressed the need to leverage partnerships between local and state business groups, and to assist with advocacy rather than encouraging economic development actively.

- *'Important that tourism is regenerative, supports local jobs, local people, local affordable accommodation, native wildlife and habitat'* (Nubeena workshop participant)

Multiple respondents were concerned about the conflicting role of councils in land use and economic development. Respondents also indicated that economic development and local promotion is a task that can be taken up by the state government instead

- *'It should be up to individual businesses to promote themselves. I don't see this as a major function of local government'* (Hobart workshop participant)
- *'Local jobs translates to less travel outside of the LGA and translates to lower emissions and a better, greener world.'* (Howrah survey respondent)

Many participants saw the value of economic development being delivered by council but recognised State and Federal government's contributions to tourism, and community and volunteer contributions to advocacy.

- *'Economic Development is really important but local promotion and tourism may be less important as there are already existing organisations such as local and state tourism bodies.'* (Leith survey respondent)

Participants who did not regard this as important believed more could be done by the State Government or peak bodies. This sentiment particularly applied for tourism and promotion activities.

- *'Shouldn't this be state run? If there was a democratic way of distributing funds and all areas promoted equally, why is it needed to be done by a council?'*. (Somerset survey respondent)

3.5 Working well, and not working well

This section describes community satisfaction (working well) and dissatisfaction (not working) towards the broad range of council services

Community participants show a dissatisfaction with their councils in the delivery of most service categories they were asked about. Of the 865 combined responses across surveys and workshops, 1,125 counts of dissatisfied remarks (59%) regarding council services, with 783 references to satisfactory services (41%).

Figure 16 demonstrates the rating across each listed council service area.

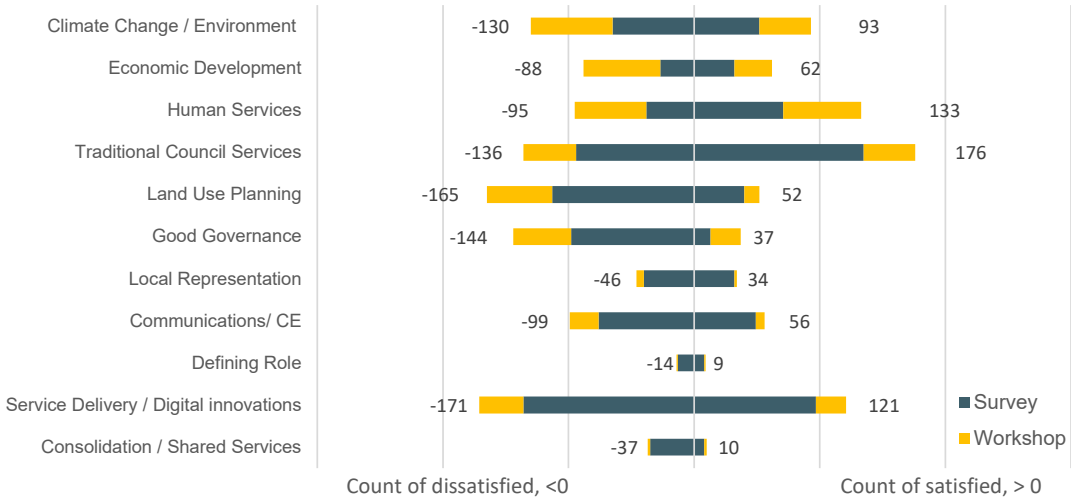

Figure 16: A combined rating of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with key themes n=865

Common drivers of this sentiment included perceived capacity and capability constraints, duplication with other levels of government, and lack of necessary economies of scale. The exceptions to this were in in relation to waste management and emergency management, where participants valued efficiency, reliability and responsiveness of the services and supported these functions being delivered locally.

Noting the earlier observation about the community's broad openness to regional coordination and funding models (but with strong local input/advocacy), it is noted that these service areas in many cases already involve and leverage regional and state-wide capabilities.

This dissatisfaction is more evident when it comes to Land use planning, Good governance, and Communications and Community engagement.

Land use planning

Land use planning was commonly cited by participants as something that local councils do not do well. Reasons given included concerns over the transparency and robustness of the application and assessment process, and the institutional capacity of council to navigate statutory planning frameworks. Many participants also cited a greater need for long term orientation in planning decisions.

- *'Council does not have the resources or the desire to exercise the notice or penalty provisions under the Local Government Act, and Land Use Planning and Approvals Act.'* (Ulverstone survey participant)
- *'More transparency especially in future zoning of private property.'* (Longley survey participant)
- *'Lengthy delays in respect of application because of lack of knowledge of Local Government Act'.* (Derwent Valley workshop participant)

Good governance

Participants who cited good governance as something that is not done well by council referred to a lack of perceived technical knowledge to navigate council functions, or a lack of transparency. Participants also cited the way in which elected members are appointed, and the ability to make and fulfil plans.

- *'The arrangement where the General Manager is appointed by the Council means that the General Manager is always beholden to Elected Member requests. Projects and priorities can change based on elected member requests without any consideration of strategic or long-term planning.'* (Rose Bay survey participant)
- *'In the past few months, a significant increase of councillors, aldermen, Mayors and deputy Mayors, have not been operating in a way during meetings that is in anyway conducive to a positive work space and a positive community engagement/image. I believe that elected members need to be held to higher standard and this could be managed by allowing mayors to utilise a function similar to that of federal government where the speaker would utilise section 44a and ask the member to leave the room.'* (Sandy Bay survey participant)
- *'Conflict of interest: Councillors and mayors … It has been common for developers to be councillors. There should be pre-requisites councillors need to abide by including conflict of interest.'* (Huon Valley workshop participant)

Traditional Council Services

'Traditional council services' featured heavily as a point of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, highlighting that it is an area not meeting expectations of residents, but this may be experienced in different ways. Traditional council services include Infrastructure provision and management and waste management service areas. Some comments from satisfied participants include:

- *'The Council is strong on what it does. I am satisfied with its capital works programs and core responsibilities which must be seen as its main responsibility to the community and ratepayers.'* (Bonnet Hill survey participant)
- *'We have had many road upgrades in recent years, waste collection is good - recycling, green and hard waste collection services are good (although there seems to be some changes coming to our council around green waste categories soon).'* (Dodges Ferry survey participant)

This contrasts with comments from dissatisfied participants:

- *'Road maintenance simply does not meet the minimum standard expected by rate payers, the condition of roads does play a part in road accidents and needs addressing as a priority.' (Acton Park survey participant)*
- *'We do not do public toilets very well at all!! There isn't a public toilet in the Wynyard/ Somerset area that is pleasant at all. Recycling could be done better, with more information about what is recycled in our area and where people can take their recycling to.' (Wynyard survey participant)*

Service Delivery and Digital Innovations follows a similar pattern, attracting a high volume of responses and higher percentage of participants being dissatisfied.

Workshop participants were more likely to be dissatisfied with Economic Development, and Climate Change and the Environment, than survey participants

Satisfaction by council classification

Figures 17 and 18 below express the rate of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with each listed Council service, split by council classification (as defined in the report preamble). Note rates of satisfaction and dissatisfaction against Council location with a low number of respondents will be over-represented as percentages in the tables.

Good governance

Feedback indicated high levels of dissatisfaction across all council categories. The highest levels of dissatisfaction were evident in RAVL category councils (88%), and the highest level of satisfaction were evidence in RASM Councils (35%), with all council classifications having a higher average dissatisfaction rate of 60%.

Communication and community engagement

Feedback indicated a range of moderate to high levels of dissatisfaction. The 18 responses from RAL councils were equally satisfied and dissatisfied (50%), while 73% of responses from RASM reported dissatisfaction with this service.

Defining role

A low level of responses was received regarding Defining Role across all categories. The highest number of responses was received from UM councils, where dissatisfaction makes up the majority of responses (69%). All other Council categories received two responses.

Service delivery

Service Delivery attracted a high number of responses across all council categories. The highest level of satisfaction was reported in RAL councils (47%), and closely followed by RAVL councils (46%). Respondents from RASM councils were more likely to be dissatisfied with Service Delivery than other council categories (77%).

Consolidation and shared services

A low level of responses was received regarding Consolidation and Shared Services across all categories. The limited responses indicate high levels of dissatisfaction that councils have not implemented shared services and consolidation and a sentiment that this is a lost opportunity to achieve economies of scale. UM councils express particularly high levels of dissatisfaction (92%).

Local representation

Local Representation received mixed level of satisfaction. RAL was the only category that was more satisfied than dissatisfied (63%), while receiving 8 responses. US and RASM both received 16 responses, with equal levels of dissatisfaction (62%).

Climate change and the environment

Most council categories were marginally more dissatisfied than satisfied on services related to Climate Change and the Environment, with the highest levels of satisfaction being from UM councils (45%) This is to the exception of RAVL, who reported higher levels of dissatisfaction than other categories (79%).

Economic development

US councils were more likely to be dissatisfied with Economic Development than other council categories (77%). All Categories expressed dissatisfaction, with the highest rate of satisfaction being was 47% in RAL councils. This was marginally greater than Um councils (45%).

Human services

Human Services received mixed rates of satisfaction. Of the 5 Council categories, RASM and RAL expressed higher rates of satisfaction than dissatisfaction (57% and 53% respectively). This contrasts to the trends observed in UM and US Councils, where respondents expressed higher rates of dissatisfaction (67% and 62% respectively). These findings gesture towards a divergence between smaller rural councils and urban councils.

Land use planning

All council categories expressed dissatisfaction with Land Use Planning. RAVL and RASM (77%) councils expressed low levels of dissatisfaction as similar levels. UM councils expressed slightly lower levels of dissatisfaction, despite dissatisfied responses making up the majority of responses (80%)

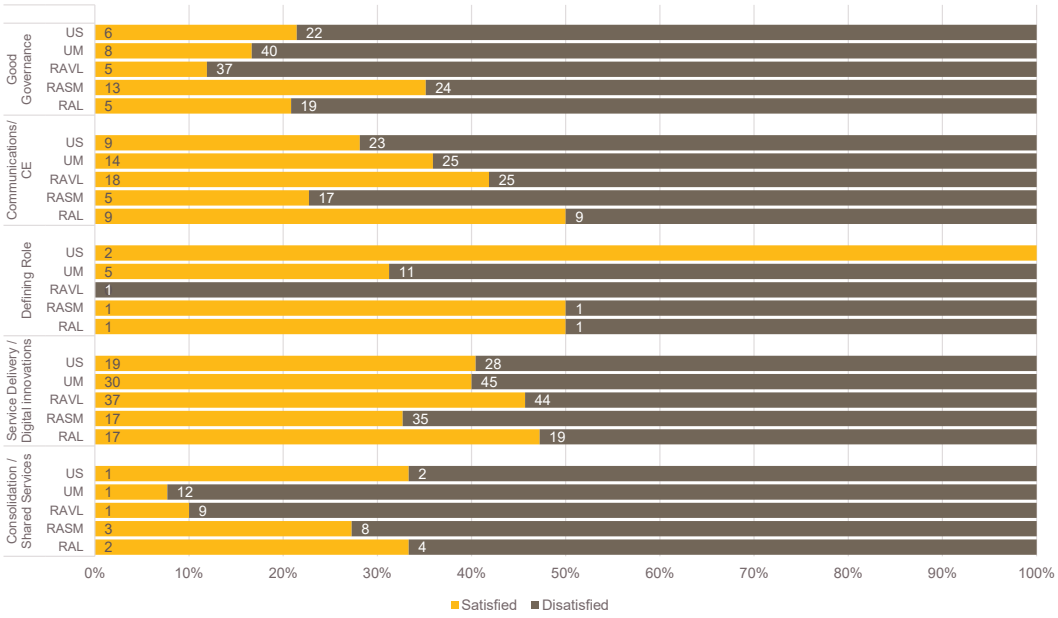

Figure 17: Satisfaction and dissatisfaction of services by Council category (%) n=865 (1)

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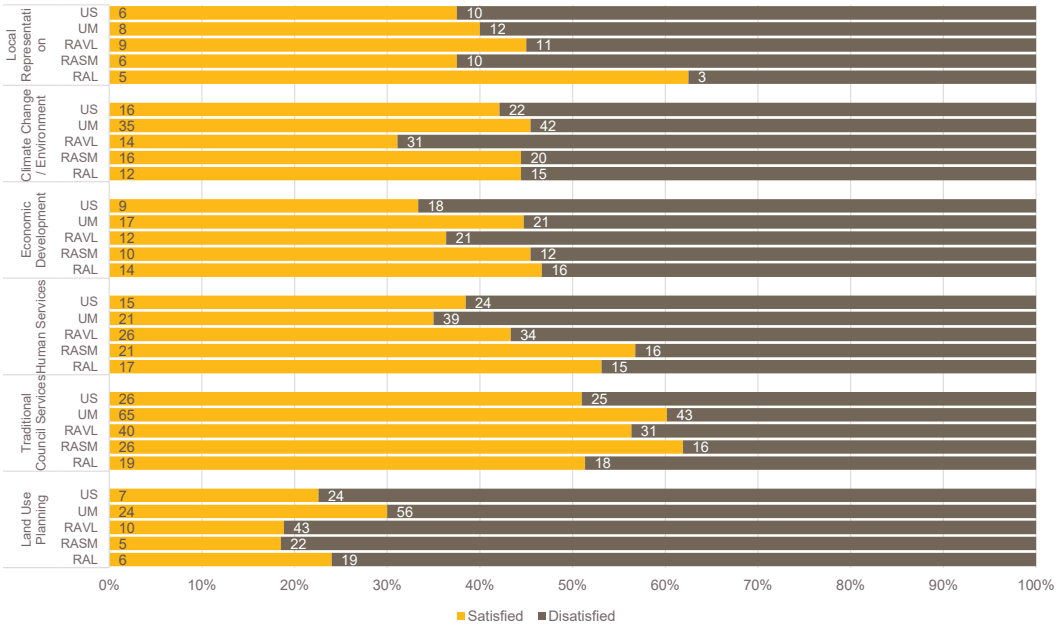

Figure 18: Satisfaction and dissatisfaction of services by Council category (%) n=865 (2)

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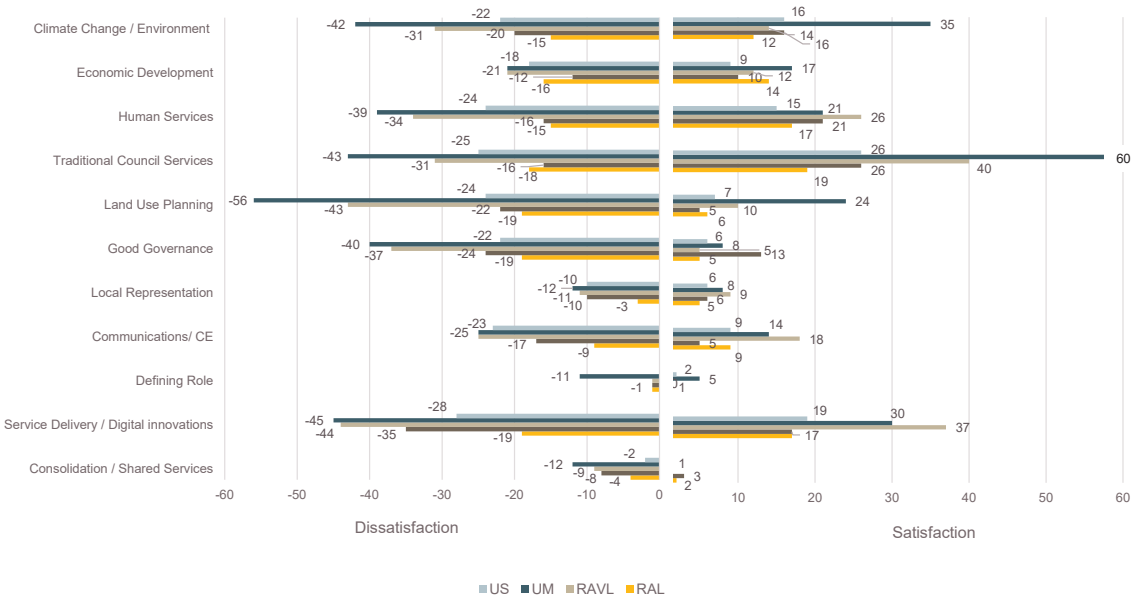


Figure 19: A combined rating of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with key themes by Council category n=865

3.6 Key focus areas for the future

Across all engagement activities, *'What do you think are the key focus areas for local government in the coming years?*' was consistently asked, allowing for comparison between community responses and local government sector engagement.

Overall, the key focus area for local councils in the coming years is Climate Change and the Environment as the most cited by survey respondents (18%), workshop participants (12%) and in alignment with the local government sector (18%).

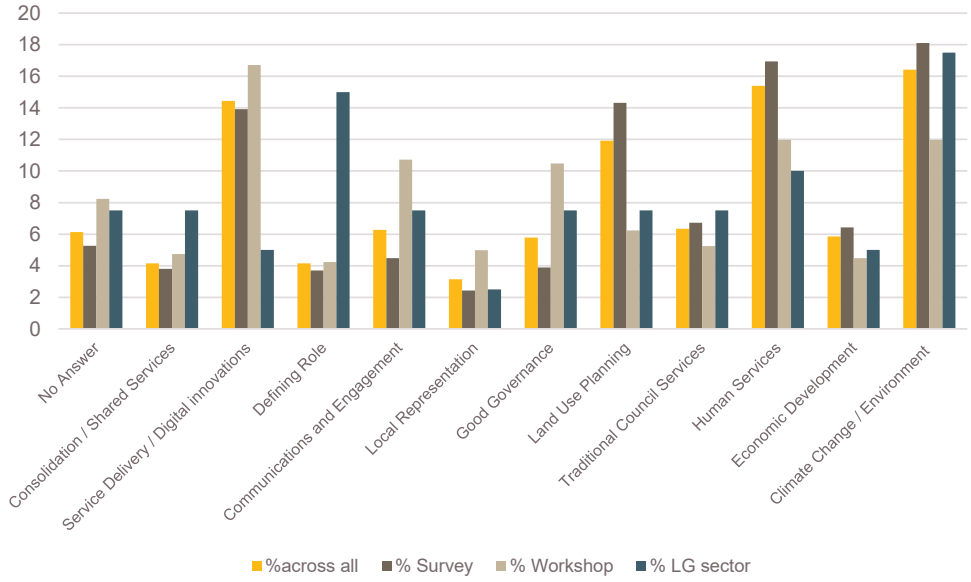


Figure 20: percentage of responses to the question 'What are the key focus areas for local councils in the coming years?

There is a strong recognition that to maintain and protect what matters most to communities - the natural environment and lifestyle - acting on climate change is an important and shared responsibility.

- *'Councils will have to plan and manage issues related to climate change, such as sea level rises, flooding and increased risks of serious major bush fires, especially in urban areas.'* (Survey respondent)
- *'[Local Government] needs to plan and mitigate, lead by example to become as green, clean and sustainable as it can and help residents' (*George Town workshop participant)
- *Climate change mitigation and prevention* (Devonport Elected Representatives workshop)

Human services is also a strong area of focus for community participants, particularly survey respondents (17%), and aligned with discussions within the local government sector (10%) on the importance of community services to meet community needs. Comments referred to

addressing the changing demographics of their communities, and services needing to be equitable and accessible.

- *'My local council needs to focus on an aging population, digital platforms for delivering services online & health & lifestyle changes.'* (Survey Respondent)
- *LG need to have their finger on the pulse of what hardship their residents are facing and work hard to support, address, lobby, advocate'* (George Town workshop participant).
- *External: Community resilience - inequality, climate, disaster…Social inequality… Accessibility - info, spaces, services, participation, Health and wellbeing* (Clarence staff workshop)

Service delivery was also seen as a key focus area for community participants, (and more so among workshop participants (17%)) while comparatively lower for the local government sector (5%). This related to 'getting the basics right', finding efficiencies and attracting and retaining an effective workforce and a general sense of improving service delivery. Related to this, digital innovation is an emerging theme from participants, with some divergence on increasing use of online platforms, to ensuring an ageing population are supported and engaged.

- *'Attracting and retaining the next generation of staff; they need to adapt and change from old ways to make it more appealing for the next gen because at the moment its not'* (Sorell workshop participant)
- *Coordination centres and resource offices as part of a services Tasmania office/headquarters* (Swansea workshop participant)
- *LG's traditionally provide key services to the community that private enterprises see no profit in providing e.g. roads, stormwater, rubbish collection, new infrastructure to enable development* (Brighton, Local Government Workshop)

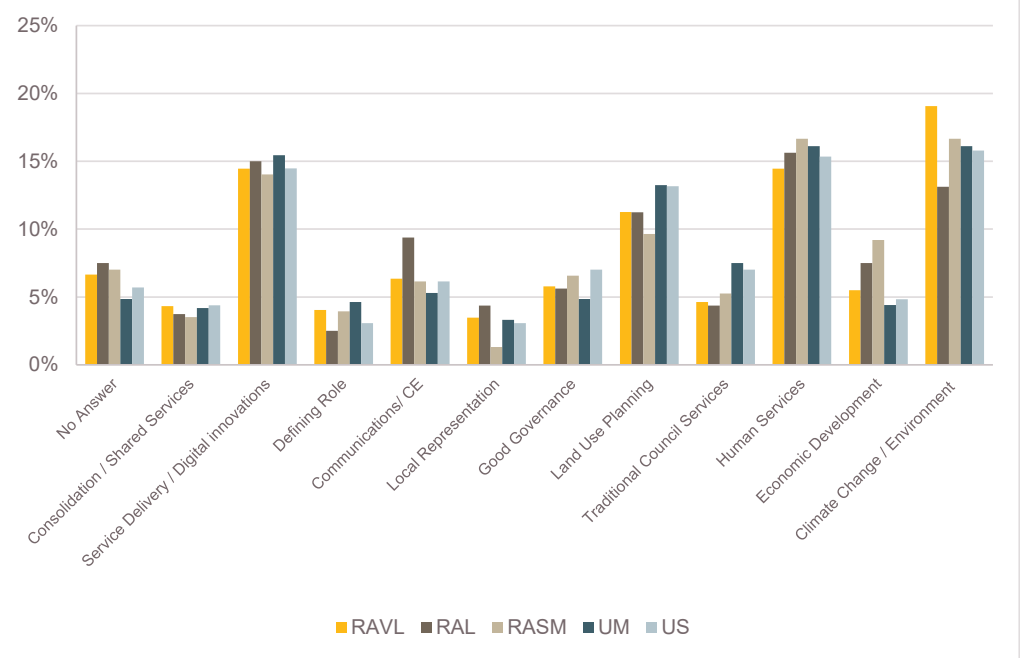


Figure 21: Percentage of responses to the question 'What are the key focus areas for local councils in the coming years?' by Council category

Workshop participants:

Workshop participants are more likely to want local councils to focus on service delivery, good governance and communications and engagement compared to survey respondents and the local government sector. This reflects workshop discussions on lived experience where community expectations have not been met. Sentiments included that good communication provides transparency and clarity on local government decisions and activities.

Survey respondents:

Human Services and Land Use Planning had a proportionally stronger focus for survey respondents, reflecting the desire to maintain and improve what is most valued in their local communities.

Local Government sector:

Defining the role of local government is key focus areas that stood out for the local government sector. This reflects the challenges that local councils have in building understanding of their role and function.

Council type category:

As demonstrated in Figure 21, climate change was more likely to be recommended as a Key Focus area for RAVL councils (19%), but less likely for RAL councils (13%). Human Services was slightly stronger in RASM type councils (17%) whereas Service Delivery/Digital Innovations was more likely to be recommended by RAL (15%). Land Use Planning was a stronger focus area for urban council respondents (each 13%) than regional (10 – 11%). Communications and

Community Engagement was more likely to be recommended by RAL council respondents (9%) – despite still maintaining a low level of total responses.

RASM Councils were more likely to recommend Economic Development as a key focus area (9%), but less likely to recommend Local Representation (1%)

3.7 What a great local council looks like in 20 years

Community responses to what a great Tasmanian local council will look like in 20 years shows local representation (16%), consolidation/shared services (14%), service delivery (14%) and good governance (11%) as the areas reflecting future aspirations.

Survey respondents were more likely to suggest areas of local representation and workshop participants were more likely to suggest areas of service delivery, consolidation/shared services and communications and engagement as aspects of a great local council in the future.

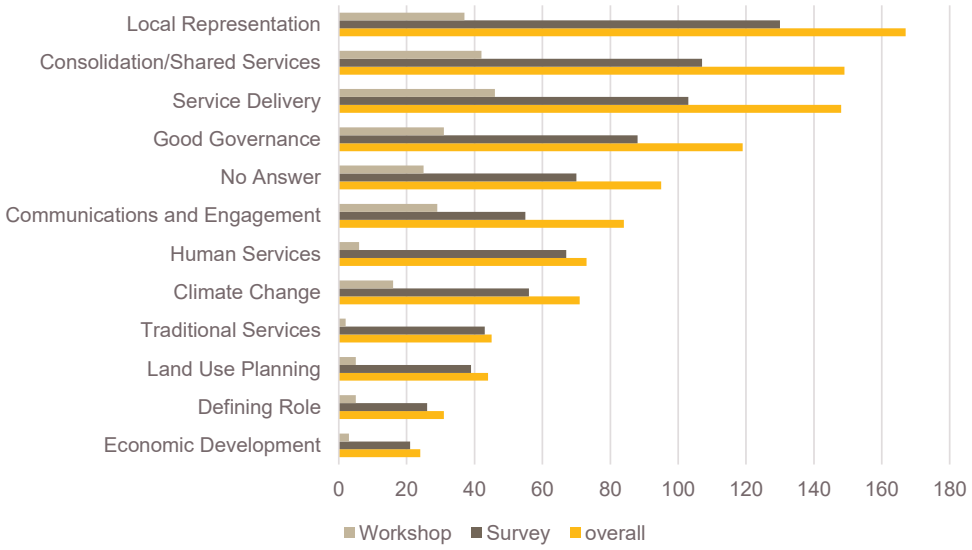


Figure 22: Responses to the question 'What would a great Tasmanian local council look like in twenty years?' by theme (n=550)

Local representation

Both survey and workshop participants believe local representation is imperative for a great council in the future. Comments include that the workforce and elected officials should better represent the community. It was suggested that could also be through advocating or working towards the shared goals of local communities. Understanding and responding to local issues was frequently cited.

- *'A council that works together with the town people, addressing important needs & getting things done'* (New Norfolk workshop participant)
- *'Reflective of the community and being nimble… in 20 years time I would like responsive, agile, representative, and dynamic LGAs'* (Online workshop participant)

- *'A great Tasmanian local council should have a great communication system with its ratepayers. Enabling more involvement and easier access to services by ratepayers. Encouraging ratepayers to become more positive & active with local councils.'* (Survey respondent)

Consolidation / shared services

Many participants believed that consolidation or shared services would make a great Tasmanian local council in 20 years. Some participants were in strong favour of consolidation, specifying that the number of Councils should be greatly reduced with responsibilities overseen by the State Government. Other responses believed in the role of local councils in delivering services but believed more shared services with proximate councils would be beneficial.

- *'Sharing services and resources across Councils and/or amalgamations to get better outcomes for the community.'* (Survey respondent)
- *Big enough to be viable yet small enough to care. Some resources will be centralised, other services maintained at local level.* (Campbell Town workshop participant)
- *'It would be a Bioregional Council with good local representation – participatory democracy'* (Huonville workshop participant).

Service delivery

Participants' responses expressed a desire for timeliness and transparency in the delivery of council services. Responsiveness was also frequently mentioned, as was working in partnership with community and other levels of government to meet community needs.

- *'They keep with the times in delivering services that are relevant and up to date. They co-operate with other local services in developing community driven needs.'* (Survey respondent)
- *'Easy to engage with; Transparent processes that provide customers with efficient services; Nimble and able to adopt to a changing technical landscape.'* (Survey respondent)
- *'Is delivering and tailoring services and supports to local needs is a recognised and respected level of government working in partnership with other tiers of government'* (Launceston Workshop Participant).

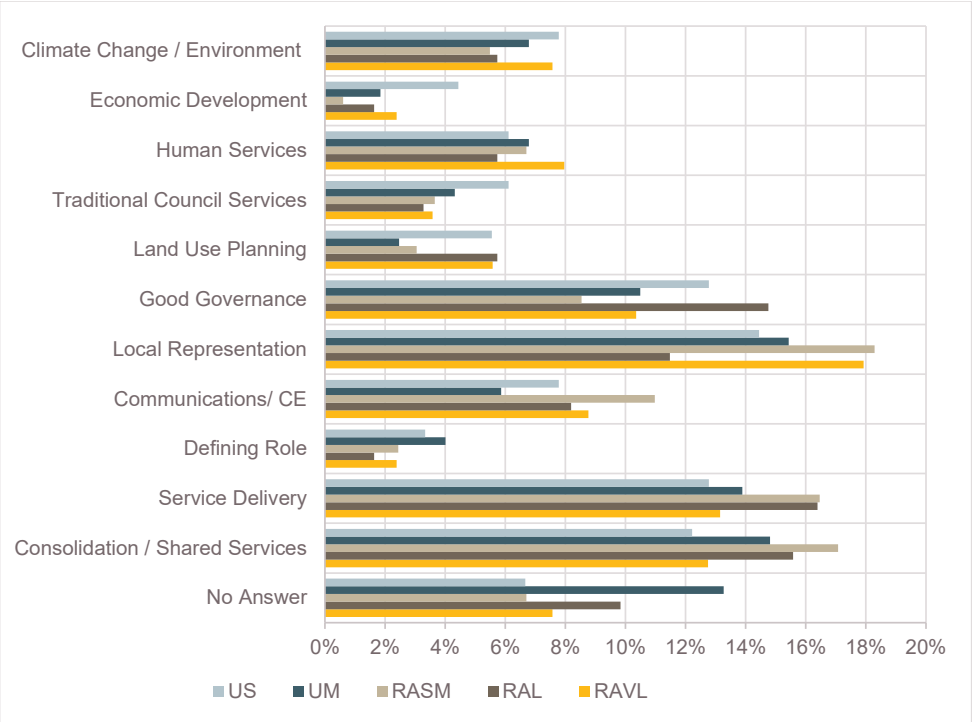


Figure 23: Responses to the question 'What would a great Tasmanian local council look like in twenty years?' by theme, by council classification (n=550)

The above figure highlights a high level of divergence between Council categories on what makes a great Council.

Local Representation is less important for RAL (11%), but more important for RASM and RAVL (both 18%)

Good Governance was most important for RAL out of the council Categories (15%), Consolidation and Shared Services was most important for RASM (17%), and Local Representation was most important for RAV (18%).

Likewise, Local Representation was most important for UM (15%), followed closely by Consolidation and Shared Services (15%). Economic Development was the least important (2%). Local Representation was also most important for US (14%), followed by Service Delivery (13%) and Good Governance (13%).

4 Engagement Findings: LGAT Workshops

In parallel and with reference to community and peak body engagement activities, the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) facilitated 12 workshops across the state with council staff and elected representatives, comprising:

- two workshops (one with Mayors, one with General Managers)
- six regional forums with Elected Representatives (two in each region)
- six regional forums with council employees (two in each region), and
- three online sessions

The locations of workshops were Brighton, Waratah, Launceston, Devonport, Clarence, and the Bass Strait Islands (with King Island and Flinders Island held online). It is worth noting that the workshops were not local government area specific, with representation in workshops from different councils.

In total, 151 staff and 74 elected representatives registered for the sessions, with some workshops having lower attendance than expected, and others having higher. The workshops were facilitated by LGAT, with the following question frame posed to participants:

- What makes for a strong local government?
- What are the emerging challenges and risks local government can play a role in?
- What needs to change to better support local government to deliver better services to the community?
- What do you think are the key focus areas for local government in the coming years?

A summary of the discussion of each of the four questions is presented in detail below.

4.1 What makes for a strong local government?

Role of local government

In regard to the role of local government, there was a general consensus that councils should serve the community, advocating on their community's behalf and recognising opportunities to improve prosperity and quality of life. Local government should have clear objectives, a strategic vision, and an understanding of what council must deliver, where healthy debate is accepted.

- *'Clarity of objectives: what must council deliver, aligned through vision, plans, staff and councillors to deliver it, walk the talk, and constructive debate is the norm'* (Brighton workshop participant, elected representative
- *Build understanding of role of local gove*rnment - *variation in interpretation of legislative responsibilities; flexibility is good but hard to pin down what local government is responsible for* (Clarence workshop participant, council staff member)

Communication and engagement with community

Participants agreed that councils should know, understand and be engaged with their community. Councils should be able to listen to their community, proactively and reactively, and

act accordingly. The community should be engaged and empowered to participate in their council's work with representation from a diversity of stakeholders.

- *'Empower the community by involving them in decisions & involve them in solutions – genuinely.'* (Clarence workshop participant, council staff member)
- *'Efficient Communication Between Staff and Councillors.'* (Waratah workshop participant, elected representative)

Elected representatives and staff

Participants believed there should be strong leadership and elected representatives should act as a cohesive group. Elected representatives should be politically astute and aware, with clear motivations, passion, commitment, and a willingness to serve the community and work as part of a team towards a common purpose.

Participants agreed that having a skilled workforce with good capability and capacity, and a diversity of skill sets was an important feature of a strong local government. A good and cooperative relationship should exist between elected representatives and staff with transparency, trust, efficient communication and a healthy, positive and respectful culture. Elected representatives and staff should be inclusive and work together to represent their communities, with representation from every area of the municipality.

- *'A culture of trust and respect and the capacity to provide frank and fearless advice to allow elected members to make proper prudent decisions.' (*Devonport workshop participant, elected representative)

Councils should be well resourced with staff, elected representatives, and the community a having a clear understanding of their operational and strategic functions. There should be a cohesive and stable workforce with good industrial relations. Elected representatives and staff should understand the processes of local government, including meeting procedures and accountability for their council's performance and outcomes.

Councils should be approachable and accessible by residents providing good and responsive customer service. Councils should also develop long term, strong, collaborative relationships with the Local Government sector and pursue joint benefits with an awareness of regional and sub-regional needs and priorities.

Strategic planning and operations

Participants believed that councils should have an effective and achievable strategic plan with a clear vision and direction and be confident to make bold decisions. Councils should be able to define, articulate and lead on community views and priorities and there be a continuous improvement mindset and be innovative.

Councils should also look to the future, operating sustainably, and avoiding burdening future generations. There should be consistent support for regional bodies and regional projects. Councils should be able to operate efficiently, 'get things done' and be outcomes driven. Core services must be delivered to an expected standard.

- *'Councils must have great technology and efficient business processes.'* (Launceston workshop participant, council staff member)

Governance and finance

Councils should have good governance that is enabled by strategy, systems, and accountability. There should be genuine transparency and accountability to the community, especially regarding regulations, decision making, and the remuneration of elected representatives.

Regarding financial management, participants expressed that councils in the future should have good financial planning, a strong balance sheet, be economically viable, and financially sound. They should be able to sustainably deliver services and balance asset management, capital expenditure, maintenance, and planning. Elected representatives should be able to set aside prejudices and self-interest to achieve this.

Land use and planning

In reflecting on what makes a strong local government, there is a sentiment from participants that the proximity of local government to the community means that council is in a good position to meets needs of residents, businesses, and developers and this may be an advantage over a central planning system. This view diverges in response to the question on what needs to change to better support local governments with some sentiment referring to an independent decision-making body.

4.2 What are the emerging challenges and risks local government can play a role in?

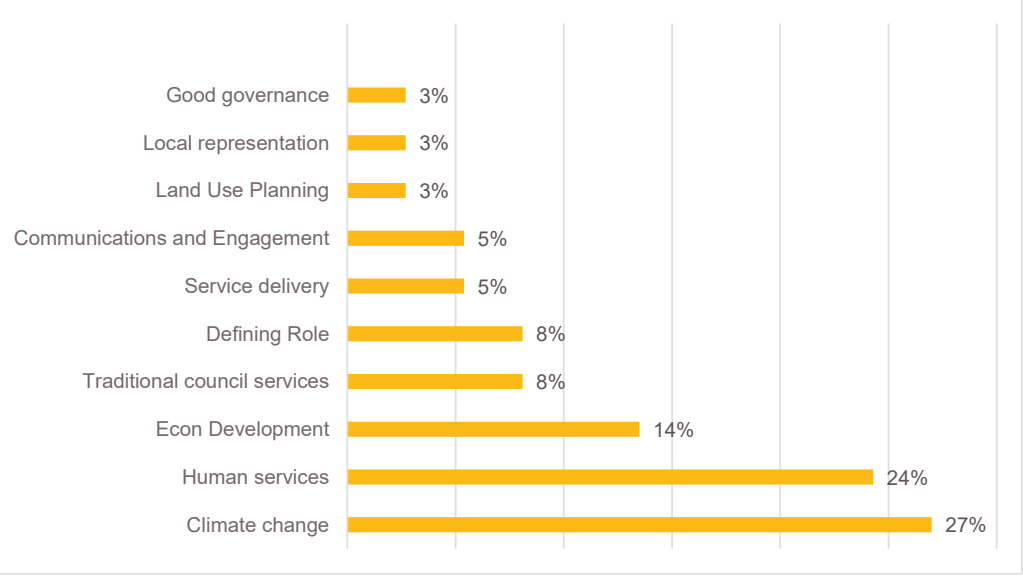


Figure 24: Percent of comments to the question 'What are the emerging challenges and risks local government can play a role in' (n=37)

Climate change and emergency management

Climate change was one of the most frequently mentioned challenges at the LGAT workshops. Participants believed councils, as a planning authority, should be taking a lead role in climate change adaptation and acting as a first defence, noting that the finances may not be available to make this investment. Councils are aware of rising sea levels, landslides and erosion, and the decline in river health that comes with climate change.

- *'Climate change - green space for human recreation for local ecology. Environment is now critical and more so responding to; all our actions have impacts.'* (Brighton workshop participant, elected representative)

Emergency management recovery and resourcing is also seen as important role and future challenge for local government. There is a desire for more planning, infrastructure, and resourcing for emergency services.

- *'Increasing reliance on councils for emergency management and response. Too reactive rather than planned' (*Waratah workshop participant, staff member)

Human services

The challenge raised about human services was the lack of specialised staff and the ability to attract, train and retain staff. COVID-19 has changed the way in which people view work and creates an opportunity to attract better people for the job.

- *'Expectations of changing communities/demographics. Loneliness/mental health/ health - what is LG role?'* (Clarence Workshop participant, elected representative)

Economic development

Economic development should be 'place based', but there is currently an over-reliance on single industries in certain areas. Councils have a role in encouraging new sectors, working with locals and providing platforms for small businesses to trial and start.

- *'Economic Diversification: Over-reliance on one industry. Encourage new sectors.'* (Mayors' Workshop)

Service delivery

Waste management, housing, health and wellbeing (including mental health) were frequently mentioned as service delivery challenges.

Councils are grappling with the impacts of housing affordability and is expected to have an increasing role in providing emergency and social housing for the vulnerable and homeless. With rent and sales prices high, councils have a role in supporting affordable housing options through making land available for residential development.

For waste management, there is an opportunity to reduce landfill and improve recycling, implement circular economy principles and to transform existing systems to move towards zero waste to landfill.

Councils play varying and often unclear and inconsistent roles in delivering health and wellbeing services. A lack of general practitioners in some communities is a challenge, which has led some councils to providing these services themselves. There could be a future role for councils as an advocacy, coordination and delivery partner for preventative health services, which is seen as an increasingly important challenge facing local communities.

It is a challenge for the sector to prioritise resources effectively, and balancing service delivery with financial sustainability while minimising rate increases and understanding and staying 'in-scope' of its role. Consideration should also be given to the difference in the service levels offered to isolated communities and rural areas compared to urban and growth areas.

Demographic change

The demographics of Tasmania are changing, particularly with an ageing population and associated challenges, such as providing access to higher levels of health services and addressing increased social isolation.

Where there are low levels of education, skills and training, there are challenges in social inequity, social inclusion and accessibility. Population growth in some areas is straining public infrastructure as a result of population growth, for example with transport and stormwater provision.

Technology and innovation

Cyber security risks are increasing, and the sector is lagging in digital innovation, presenting a clear opportunity for innovation. There is an increased demand for-tech based services while balancing privacy and democratic principles.

4.3 What needs to change to better support LG delivering services to the community?

Role of local government

Clarifying the role of local government is an important and recurring theme. This includes what is in and out of scope for councils generally, clarifying core services, and considering and identifying which services are best delivered by local government, and which might be best delivered by a different level of government, or the private sector in order to minimise duplication. e.g. private businesses.

- *'Better community understanding of the role of LG and Elected Members.'* (Mayors Workshop)

Several individuals called for constitutional recognition of local government as a way of clarifying the role of councils

Funding

Along with role clarity, the funding of local government was a frequent topic raised by workshop participants. There was a call for appropriate resourcing to support councils to deliver their functions and to enable certainty and long-term asset planning and delivery of services. Some suggestions for reform include standardising fees across councils and that rates should increase in line with CPI.

The current grants system was raised as a potential area for change, particularly in relation a lack of long-run funding certainty and the cumulative reporting burden associated with individual grants.

Ensuring the equitable distribution of resources amongst metropolitan and regional areas was raised as a potential area for change, as was funding for roads and the way the Heavy Vehicles Levy is currently divided between State and local governments. There is a strong view that

additional funding should also be made available to support councils' role in climate change mitigation.

- *'Funding grants "not linked" to election cycles.'* (Waratah Workshop, council staff)

Operations

The sector would benefit from an investment in technology to establish a common IT platform, which would support shared services and standardised functions and software across councils. This could in turn create economies of scale and increase consistency in 'back office' business services, such as risk management, human resources, procurement, and tenders.

Relationship and interaction with State and Federal governments

Participants reflected that there is an opportunity to improve how the local government sector interacts with the state and federal governments. Suggestions for improvement include well-defined policies from State Government that are kept up to date, defined service levels and appropriate resourcing from the State Government to assist in delivery of services.

The sector would like to see improved connectivity between the levels of government, aligned towards achieving common goals, and recognition of the role that local government plays in service delivery. Grants should not be linked to election cycles but should allow for long-term strategic planning and delivery of services that they are funded to provide.

Elected representatives and staff

To improve the capabilities of elected representatives and staff, participants suggested regular education and training for councillors, including improving the understanding of conflicts of interest, the code of conduct, and council meeting procedures. The idea of increasing both elected member and staff remuneration was raised as an option for improving the overall level of skill and professionalism in the sector.

An improved culture, greater diversity in representation, and more flexible workplaces was also raised as important. Providing and sharing more resources for councils, such as precedent policies, sample processes, proformas from legislation, and business process improvements was also raised.

Communication and community engagement

Building trust with the community and creating an environment where the community understands the role of local government is a desired change for the sector. Likewise, there was a suggestion that councils should develop community engagement frameworks and involve their communities more in the decision-making process. Providing better information to support residents to understand how their rates are being spent was also flagged.

Land use and planning

Participants had divergent views on land use planning, with some considering that planning should be able to respond to and reflect local needs and others considering that there should be an independent decision-making body.

4.4 What do you think are the key focus areas for Local Government in the coming years?

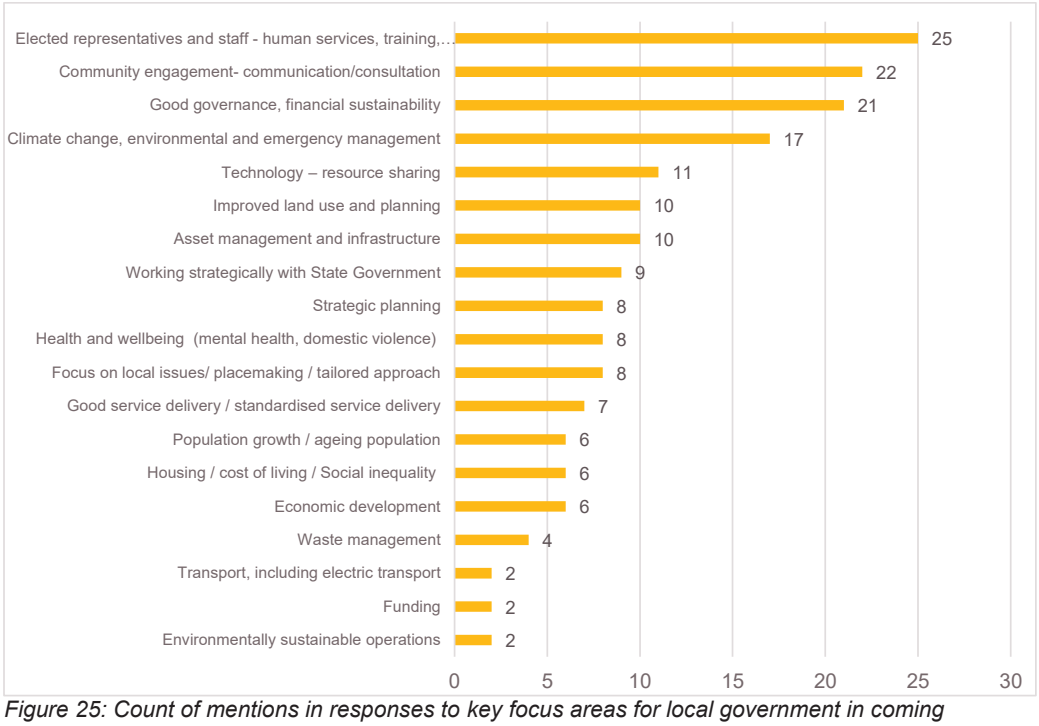


Figure 25: Count of mentions in responses to key focus areas for local government in coming years

When LGAT workshop participants were asked to reflect on what are the key focus areas for local government in the coming years, the most frequently mentioned topics were:

- Improving the capacity, calibre and retention of elected representatives and staff through training, remuneration, culture improvements (25 mentions)
- Community engagement, including communication, building trust, consultation and improving the understanding of the role and work of local government (22 mentions)
- Good governance and financial sustainability, including transparency and accountability through codes of conduct (21 mentions)
- Climate change, environmental management, and emergency management (17 mentions)
- Technology, implementing new and sharing resources such as IT systems (11 mentions).

Other topics included improved land use planning, asset management and infrastructure, working strategically with State Government, health and wellbeing, and focusing on local issues.

Overall, there was a sentiment that the sector wants to work more strategically and collaboratively, including in partnership with the State Government, to find efficiencies and improve consistencies, but to retain the flexibility and other advantages of local, place-based approaches in those service areas where this is important.

The role of local government in land use and planning remains an issue that generates a range of divergent views across the sector. When discussing the topic, participants would acknowledge that reform is needed but did not articulate a clear way forward.

5 Engagement findings: Sector forums

Four Sector Forums were hosted to engage with peak body organisations with a stake in the success of local government. A list of the organisations represented at the forums is included in Appendix C. Stakeholders were invited to participate in one of four subject areas based on the Review themes:

- Economic development and local promotion /infrastructure provisions and management
- Community wellbeing
- Governance, accountability and representation/finance and administration
- Land use planning and other regulatory services, environment

Forums were held on Thursday 31 March and Friday 1 April 2022 at the Hotel Grand Chancellor Hobart. On average, 15 sector participants attended each of the four forums. Members of the Local Government Board attended the forums as observers. Keynote speeches from representatives of industry and local government to open each forum. Small group discussions were facilitated to reflect on the following questions.

- What makes for a strong local government partner?
- What are the emerging challenges and risks in your sector?
- Where are the opportunities in Local Government's role or function to enhance sector outcomes?

5.1 High level themes

The Review of local government is an opportunity for a holistic transformation of the local government model in Tasmania. It must consider the size, structure and number of local government organisations required to drive high quality community outcomes across the State. A critical theme evident in all forums was that the core purpose and role of local government needs to be more clearly defined and understood by all.

Participants expect local councils to collaborate with each other across municipal boundaries, removing silos and developing capacity to deal with critical, contiguous environmental, health, and infrastructure challenges. There is a prevailing sentiment that local government is currently inward looking, lacks confidence, and avoids difficult decisions.

Generally, it was accepted that local governments need the resourcing and capacity to undertake this change. Councils need the appropriate financial and operational scale to:

- be more customer-centric
- be an expert advocate for its own community, people, and place
- respond to local needs
- be a credible, strategic partner with regional and state authorities and industry.

5.2 Theme-specific discussions

Alongside broad directions, each forum yielded sector-specific directions and themes:

Economic development and local promotion /infrastructure provisions and management

- Confirm local governments role/s in strategic economic development, including provision of infrastructure
- Respond to conflicts of interest in role as proponent and regulator on development proposals
- Identify and define role of local government in driving economic prosperity, climate change adaptation, quality housing
- Consider ability for local government to attract and retain skilled workforce (especially in the regions).

Community Wellbeing

- Establish a model of service that minimises current avoidance/risk-averse culture
- Enhance opportunity for local government to collaborate more effectively with community health and wellbeing partners
- Find ways to develop broader trust and sharing of knowledge and resources currently in local government control.

Governance, accountability and representation/finance and administration

- Clarify responsibility/purpose of local government
- Unravel constraints of councillors' planning authority role
- Deal with mismatch of function/responsibilities/role and capabilities and provide the necessary funding to perform said functions/responsibilities/role
- Improve community consultation standards
- Improve strategic planning of services, including shared services.

Land use planning and other regulatory services, environment

- Respond to the lack of capable/competent skilled people in the planning system
- Formalise working relationships with regional, State, and Federal Governments as they relate to land use planning
- Better define major projects and local government's effective role in their assessment

- Remove major project approvals from local government decision making, while ensuring local community views are considered.

6 Engagement findings: Written submissions

In addition to the formal engagement program undertaken by the Board during Stage 1 of the Review, a number of written submissions were submitted to the Board from members of the public, organisations, councils, and council staff and elected representatives. 39 written submissions were received, with a breakdown as follows:

- 15 from members of the public
- 13 from councils
- from organisations (including 2 from Local Government Professionals Tasmania).
- 4 from council staff and elected representatives

While the Board has reviewed and considered all written submissions, the below represents a brief analysis undertaken to identify the common themes, issues and ideas presented.

6.1 High level findings

Better defining the role of councils can help them deliver higher quality services

The submissions showcased frequent discussions on the role of council, highlighting that the traditional idea of council's role being roads, rates and rubbish is profoundly changing, with councils across Tasmania venturing into delivery of more localised services to meet the unique needs of their communities.

However, this role transformation is not without challenges. Observations included that the role of local government as described in the *Local Government Act 1993* is too broad and ambiguous to effectively guide and support councils. Other submissions noted that councils are becoming a 'provider of last resort', delivering services which are needed by their communities when no other provider will, such as health and community services. It was observed that the pressure to expand service offerings to meet growing community needs or desires also creates tensions in maintaining existing service level quality in the absence of cost reduction or increased funding.

Recommendations included that a better-defined role for councils could provide clarity on the scope or focus of services councils can provide to their communities and legitimise council functions and roles so that they are supported by appropriate funding. However, a better-defined role for councils must not be too prescriptive, so that it is enduring, and councils can remain flexible and adaptive to their community's needs.

There is significant appetite for consolidation, but different ideas of how this looks

An overwhelming majority of written submissions expressed the need for councils to undertake some form of consolidation, in order to achieve economies of scale, ensure operational sustainability, build consistent capability, promote efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, and align regional activities to provide maximum benefit to communities.

However, there were a broad and bold range of approaches to, and models of consolidation identified in these submissions. Differing approaches commonly expressed across the written submissions include:

Wholesale changes to council structures and borders based on models of shared regional profiles or urban-rural divides

Consolidation of a wide range of council services into shared service entities responsible for delivering these services consistently across the State. Services commonly identified include asset management, back-office functions such as accounting, payroll, IT, human resources, procurement, economic development, land use planning, waste management, environmental health, economic development, planning and roads.

Pooling of technical council staff into a resource shared by councils to address regional workforce shortages. Key positions identified include planners, economic development officers and environmental health officers.

We have observed that a range of submissions have noted that for consolidation to be successful and ensure the best outcomes for councils, it must be appropriately structured, and driven by sustainability and capability, not cost. Any consolidation must enhance councils' ability to deliver services and undertake functions in the most effective and efficient manner.

There is strong desire from communities, organisations and councils for increased involvement in place-based services

Prevalent across the submissions is identification that council's strength, as the level of government closest to people, is in providing services and advocacy in representation tailored to the unique needs of their communities. All stakeholder groups identified through submissions that they want councils to take on a greater role in areas which require knowledge of their local place, with a particular focus on housing, education and training, and health and community services.

Councils must collaborate more effectively together, and with State Government

Many submissions identified the need for councils to collaborate with each other, and with State Government, more effectively. There is concern expressed by all stakeholder groups around universal issues and emerging challenges impacting local communities, in particular climate change, emergency management and housing. These issues require collective action across all levels of government.

Through working insularly to address these issues, councils and the State Government are often duplicating effort and missing opportunities to integrate responses, co-design frameworks and strategies, and share resources. Better collaboration is recognised as a way of ensuring the realisation of better outcomes for communities.

Enhanced collaboration is also regularly cited as necessary for improving regional outcomes for activities such as economic development, planning, infrastructure, waste management and health service delivery.

The standard of governance needs to improve to drive the sector into the future

Good governance is important for Tasmanians, as reflected widely in the written submissions. Councils, organisations and members of the public all expressed a desire to see skilled and

capable councillors representing their communities as effectively and professionally as possible, noting issues and perceptions of unethical or poor behaviour from some councils or councillors. Stakeholders want to see elected representatives fully understanding of their role, and best equipped to advocate for and serve their communities. People also want their councils to be transparent and accountable in their decision making.

A frequent observation made by stakeholder groups is that councillors' role and functions are in some ways akin to those of corporate board members, whilst acknowledging that councillors are not held to the same standard of behaviour of board members.

It has been widely suggested that initial and refresher training be provided to all elected representatives in local government, across key areas such as managing conflicts of interest, governance obligations, planning, work health and safety. This would provide councillors with a base skillset and understanding of their role, to help them support the effective operation of their councils and best represent their communities.

Submissions have also discussed ideal levels of representation, with recommendations on reducing the size of council's elected bodies and increasing renumeration for councillors to attract higher quality representatives, thus increasing local governance. It has also been suggested that increasing the scale of local government areas would create a larger pool of higher quality prospective council candidates, though this would have to be carefully balanced with ensuring desired local representation.

7 Discussion of engagement findings

Across the various cohorts who engaged in the process, there are emerging themes and areas of focus to be considered in potential future local government reforms. These themes are summarised in the following section, highlighting where there was a convergence or divergence of views and sentiment.

7.1 Convergence of views and sentiments

Across the diverse demographics and locations of participants, there were substantial areas of convergence of sentiment around several core issues and the challenges and opportunities facing local government.

Role clarity

One of the most important objectives for the Review is to clarify local government's effective role across a whole range of functions and service areas, including health services, land use planning, emergency management and economic development. Addressing the role and purpose of councils, articulating 'who does what', and making sure there are fair funding arrangements to support these functions, is a key direction found from this engagement, including from the local government sector itself. This was seen as a threshold issue that needs priority resolution if any reform emanating from this Review is to be successful.

Service delivery and consolidation

There was a broad recognition, including from local government sector participants, that greater service consolidation and/or sharing in some form is needed. In some service areas, such as economic development and land use planning, there was a strong sentiment that a coordination role is essential to avoid duplication and allow councils to focus on the things that are seen as their 'core business'.

High quality service provision at the local level is seen as crucial across all areas. However, this was expressed in a context where many participants across all cohorts understood that consolidation might be necessary in some areas to maintain or improve service quality.

On service consolidation, there are a range of views about potential reform pathways, ranging from better coordination through to blanket amalgamations.

Governance, accountability and engagement

There was consensus across all cohorts on the need to improve the overall quality of governance, community engagement, accountability, and representation in local government.

Community members are interested in greater communication and engagement. When asked about what a great local council looks like in twenty years, participants at the community workshops frequently described local representation, community engagement and good governance.

Peak body stakeholders also called for improvement in community consultation standards. These related primarily to planning authority conflicts and formalising clear role accountabilities on a range of service and regulatory areas between councils and state government.

LGAT workshop participants expressed the desire for greater engagement with community, including improving the understanding of what the sector does and does not do and involving the community more in their decision-making processes.

Community wellbeing

Community wellbeing was seen as an area for increased focus and capacity building for the sector. There was agreement that mental health and wellbeing is an area where councils can and should do more, and where community satisfaction with service delivery was generally low.

Community participants regard local government as best positioned to address wellbeing through mental health services, cultural activities, and provision of sporting and active spaces. Community participants recognised the potential upside from better regional and state-wide coordination of both funding and delivery, so long as it still allowed for tailoring to local community needs.

The local government sector regards community wellbeing services as a key challenge it can and should respond to into the future. Peak body stakeholders in the community wellbeing sector indicate a need to improve the model of service in local government, with a greater emphasis on information and knowledge sharing and addressing what was perceived as a 'risk-averse' culture within council organisations.

Organisational capacity and capability

Across all stakeholder groups, participants were aligned in the view that there would be significant benefits from improving the capability of councils, including through improving the quality and capacity of elected representatives, creating a positive and collaborative culture between elected representatives and council staff. Participants also reflected that providing training and resources for elected representatives and staff to allow for greater consistency and to improve efficiencies.

The sector would benefit from an investment in technology to deliver a common IT platform, that would support resource sharing and standardised functions and software across council. This would create economies of scale and improve the consistency and efficiency of 'back office' business services, such as risk management, human resources, procurement, and tenders.

The exceptions to the general dissatisfaction with services expressed by community participants were in relation to waste management and emergency management, where participants valued the efficiency, reliability and responsiveness of the services they receive and support local delivery. It is noted that these services in many cases already involve or leverage regional or state-wide capabilities.

Climate change, environmental management and emergency management

Climate change was identified across all stakeholders as an area where councils need to both play a key role and need to build their capability to do so, particularly in relation to infrastructure resilience, coastal management, and land use planning decisions.

Across all cohorts, participants also expressed that local government has a role in environmental management, including in managing weeds and pests, maintaining the natural environment, and managing impacts of development on the environment and acting on climate change.

All cohorts also believed that local government had an important role to play in emergency management. Participants that believe the delivery of this service is important cited reasons such as local knowledge of context, and connection to community groups.

Infrastructure provision and strategic management

Sound infrastructure management was seen as crucial across all cohorts. Council staff were concerned about their ability to fund future requirements, and community members identified councils' capacity and capability constraints, not only in terms of funding but also strategic planning and management. Where positive views were held, they related to the value of managing and maintaining infrastructure locally to ensure timely responses to issues.

Conversely – and consistent with the broader role clarity concern – negative sentiment was in part based on a perceived lack of clear responsibility between levels of government for infrastructure. Further negative commentary was based on the perceived lack of capacity and capability of local councils to manage assets strategically. Community feedback indicated there is a view that regional and strategic challenges are often beyond the capacity of some small and medium councils.

Waste management

Waste management was considered as extremely important to be delivered by councils. Participants cited reasons such as health and safety, environmental concerns, and felt it was a core council responsibility. There were suggested improvements to waste management, including reducing waste charges for smaller households, improving recycling, and eliminating waste going to landfill.

7.2 Divergence of views and sentiments

Consensus on issues, challenges and opportunities did not always extend to agreement on the potential solutions, and this also varied across the different themes.

Land use and planning

Land use and planning received divergent views across, and within, cohorts. On the one hand, there is the desire for greater consistency and efficiency in land use planning for stakeholders like developers. It was felt that these can contrast with the perceived need by some stakeholders for a local 'veto power' where projects might negatively impact local residents. In this example, role clarity – and the resolution of role conflict – was again seen as a critical threshold issue.

For many community participants, local government's role in delivering land use planning is important to ensure local knowledge and local representation is applied to decisions. Local voice on development is seen to be of critical importance. However, a lack of technical expertise and objectivity of elected representatives was also a frequently cited reason for negative sentiments. Further, the local government sector itself also rated land use planning as an area needing change.

Economic development

Economic development and local promotion were generally rated by community participants as the least important service area for local government. Although many participants see activities

such as the promotion of tourism as important, many others share concerns about balancing the needs of tourists, locals, and the environment.

Peak body stakeholders seek greater clarity on what role local government should play in driving economic prosperity. Stakeholders questioned how local governments might attract and retain skilled workforces (particularly in the regions).

7.3 Key focus areas for local government in the coming years

Across all cohorts, when asked what local government should focus on in the coming years, the top three areas include: climate change and environment, human services, and service delivery.

For community participants who attended workshops, the top three areas include: service delivery, climate change and environment and human services.

For community participants who completed surveys, the top three areas are: climate change and environment, human services, and land use planning.

For local government elected representatives and staff, the top three areas are: climate change and environment, defining its role and human services.

8 Next Steps

The engagement outcomes in this Report provides informed analysis to the Local Government Board to help understand community and stakeholder expectations for Tasmania's local government sector. These will inform options for the future role and functions of local government; and what is the best way to design local government to support community wellbeing and maximise social and economic outcomes locally, regionally, and state-wide.

The Local Government Board will explore and test a range of options through the publication of discussion papers and holding targeted workshops and meetings in the second stage of the review July – December 2023.This Report will be made publicly available on the Future of Local Government Review website: www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au and will also be circulated to engagement activity participants.

At the end of the Review, the Board will recommend to the Government the reforms it believes are needed. The end goal is to deliver a local government sector that can meet the challenges and opportunities that Tasmanians will face in the coming decades.

Appendices

Appendix A: Community participation (demographic overview)

Community participants represented all areas of Tasmania, with a slightly higher proportion from 'Urban Medium' councils (UM) (33%), and 'Rural Agricultural Very Large' (RAVL) (24%) council types, according to the Australian Classification of Local Governments.

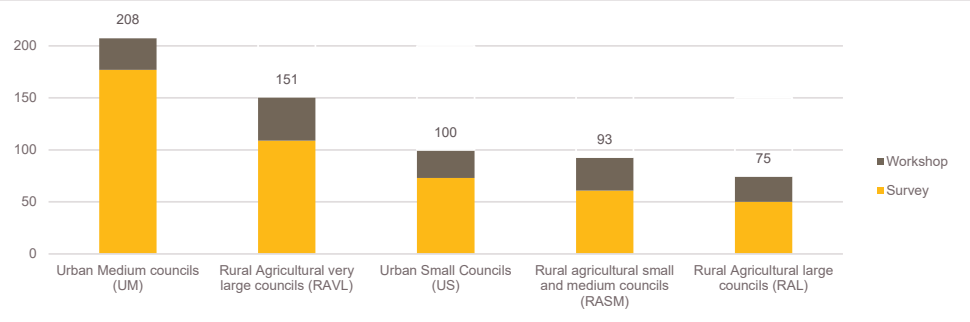


Figure 26: Community participation by council type (n=627)

Generally, community participants are highly engaged with and connected to their communities, having lived in their area for more than 25 years (28%). Regarding household type, the highest proportion of participants (44%) were from a household comprising of a 'couple without children' and a household of 'couple with children' (24%).

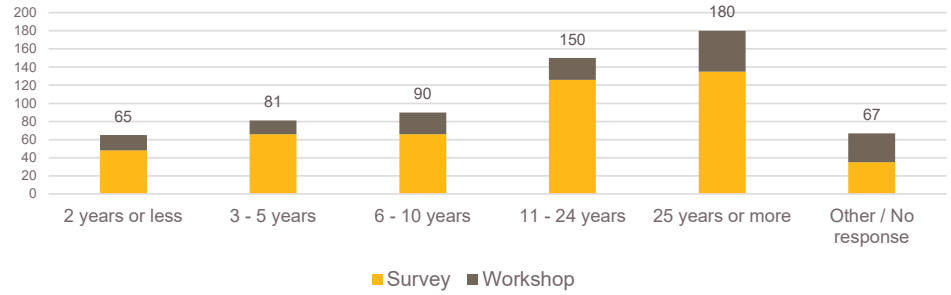


Figure 27: Number of years community lived in area (n=633)

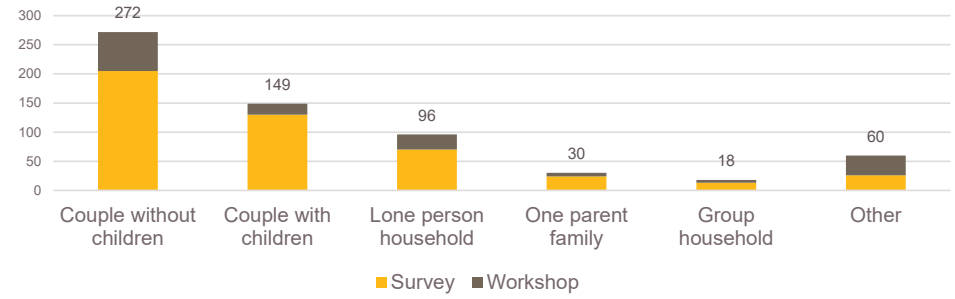


Figure 28: Community participation, by household type (n=625)

Community participants represented a broad range of ages, with the largest proportion, (46%) aged between 55-74. There was an even representation of both male (49%) and female (47%) participation.

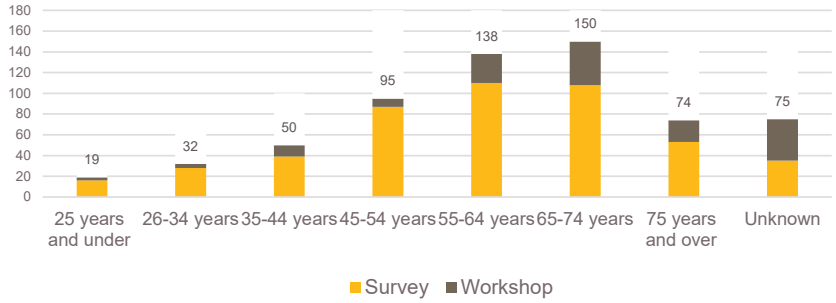


Figure 29: Age of participants (n=633)

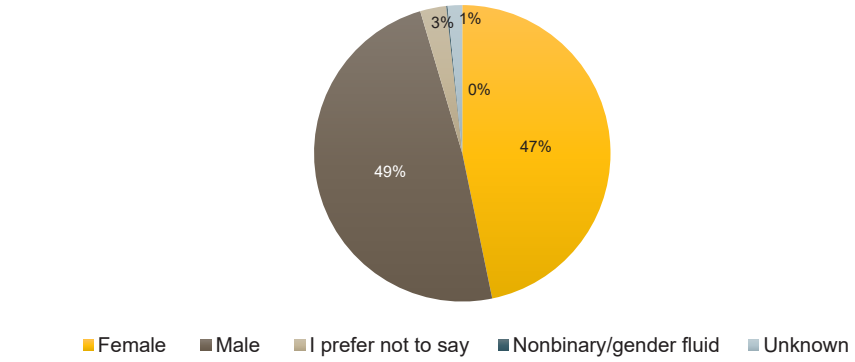


Figure 30: Gender of community participants (n=633)

Approximately half (48.6%) identified that they are affiliated with an organisation, the majority of which are affiliated with an art, recreation, or community organisation (19.5%), volunteer environmental groups or emergency services (17.8%) or a sports club (17.5%).

Other organisations included professional associations, seniors groups, local businesses, and tourism groups. Note, a small number of survey and workshop responses came from individuals who were also affiliated with a council. It is unknown if they are elected officials or staff. They responded as individuals, not on behalf of their organisation.

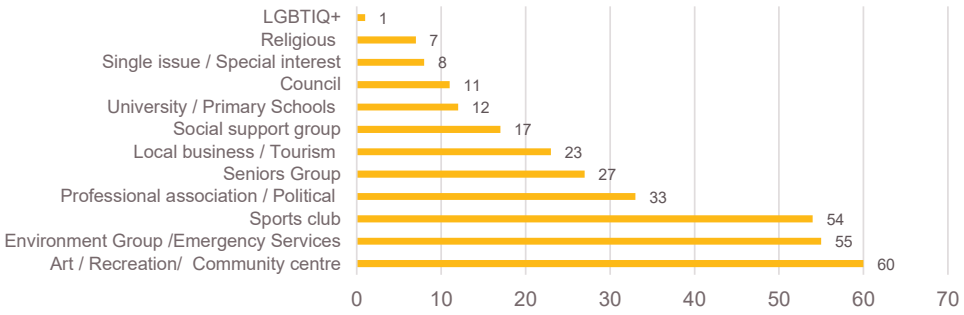


Figure 31: Community participation by affiliated organisations (n=308)

Appendix B: Pop Up Summary

The engagement team visited 20 towns across Tasmania in March 2022 to promote the review and enrol residents in future workshops. The team also recorded a small amount of feedback and distributed badges and post cards in the various towns visited. A brief report was provided to the Local Government Board on what was heard from local communities during the pop ups.

DATE	Locations and people spoken to	Reach	Positive Sentiment	Negative sentiment
Friday 25 March 3.00-5.00pm	• Derby (16) • Bridport (19)	100 postcards distributed	• Basic services like bin collection, health inspections of cafes are working well • Investment in tourism (e.g. mountain bike trails) and services for tourists are good • Protecting the environment (stronger sentiment in East Coast and Hobart) • Parks, Street, Foreshore maintenance is good (stronger sentiment in North West coast) • Customer Service is good (some areas – urban councils) • Land use controls/mgt should be strengthened, if it is too State controlled it would be too distant from people. Council functions means there are people to talk to	• Genuine community engagement in decision making • Responsiveness to community concerns • Professionalism/ competency of staff and Councillors (some areas) • Internet connection/ reliability don't have everything online • Innovation • Representation • Access to health services • Too slow to respond and act on issues raised • Roads maintenance (some areas) • Transport • Housing affordability/availability
Saturday 26 March 10.00am – 12.00pm 3.00-5.00pm	• Launceston (30) • St Helens (27) • Campbell Town (55) • Bicheno (3)	200 postcards distributed		
Sunday 27 March 10.00am – 12.00pm 2.00-5.00pm	• Glenorchy (32) • Orford (24) • Sorell (2) • Hobart CBD (53)	200 postcards distributed		
Monday 28 March 9.00 – 11.00am 3.00 – 5.00pm	• Rosny Park (40) • Kingston (14) • Huonville (22)	100 postcards distributed		
Tuesday 29 March 9.00 – 10.00am 4.00 – 6.00pm	• New Norfolk (10) • Brighton (15) • Strahan (2) • Rosebery (6)	100 postcards distributed		
Wednesday 30 March 9.00-11.00am 2.00 – 4.00pm	• Burnie (14) • Smithton 16) • Devonport (20)	150 postcards distributed		

Appendix C: Sector Forum Peak Body Representation

Community Wellbeing Sector Forum

- Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc (TASCOSS)
- Australian Football League (AFL)
- Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council Tasmania
- Salamanca Arts Centre
- Performing Lines Tas
- Australian Institute of Architects
- Rotary Tasmania
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA), Tasmania
- NRM North
- TasWriters
- Basketball Tas.
- Public Health, University of Tasmania
- Second Echo Ensemble
- DRILL Performance Company
- Glenorchy City Council
- Local Government Board

Economic Development Sector Forum

- Brand Tasmania
- Glenorchy City Council
- Housing Industry Association
- IPWEA
- Bicycle Network Tas.
- Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing & Energy Council
- Regional Development Australia Tasmania
- Road Safety Advisory Council
- Tasmanian Small Business Council
- Unions Tas.
- Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Northern Tasmania Development Corporation
- Local Government Board

Governance Sector Forum

- University of Tasmania
- Simmons Wolhagen Lawyers
- Integrity Commission
- Australian Services Union (ASU)
- LGAT
- Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand
- CPA Australia
- Governance Institute of Australia

- Australian Local Government Women's Association
- Local Government Board

Land Use Planning and Environment

- Epuron
- Archdiocese of Hobart, (AOHTAS)
- UPC
- NRM South
- Australian Institute of Architects
- Local Government Board
- Planning Matters

Appendix D: Community Workshop schedule and attendance

Community workshops were held across the state in a variety of locations. The purpose was to engage with local communities and hear from lived experiences. Conversation toolkits were also distributed to extend the conversation within community networks.

DATE	EVENT	Participant #'s
Thursday 28 April 6.00-8.00pm	George Town Community Workshop	15
Friday 29 April 10.30am – 12.30pm	Launceston Community Workshop	13
Friday 29 April 3.30– 5.30pm	Campbell Town Community Workshop	12
Saturday 30 April 10.00am – 12.00pm	St Helens Community Workshop	5
Saturday 30 April 3.30pm – 5.30pm	Swansea Community Workshop	11
Monday 2 May 10.30 – 12.30pm	Hobart Community Workshop	18
Monday 2 May 3.00 – 5.00pm	Huonville Community Workshop	11
Tuesday 3 May 10.30am-12.30pm	New Norfolk Community Workshop	6
Tuesday 3 May 3.00 – 5.00pm	Sorell Community Workshop	2
Wednesday 4 May 10.30 – 12.30pm	Nubeena Community Workshop	21
Wednesday 4 May 10.30 – 12.30pm	Devonport Community Workshop	12
Wednesday 4 May 3.00 – 5.00pm	Burnie Community Workshop	10
Thursday 5 May 10.30am – 12.30pm	Ulverstone Community Workshop	10
Thursday 5 May 3.30 – 5.30pm	Queenstown Community Workshop	5
Monday 9 May 6-8pm	ONLINE Community Workshop	11
Tuesday 10 May 6-8pm	ONLINE Community Workshop	8
Thursday 12 May 6 – 8pm	King Island Community Workshop (facilitators online, community in-person)	2

Appendix E: Local Government Sector Engagement Schedule

(Analysis and discussion in Section 4)

DATE	EVENT	Participants
17 March 2022	Mayors Workshop	All councils, except for Brighton, Burnie, Flinders, Glamorgan, Hobart, Huon Valley, Kentish, Launceston, Waratah-Wynyard, West Coast
22 March 2022	Elected representatives and staff	Glenorchy (1), Southern Midlands (5), Brighton (5), Derwent Valley (1)
29 March 2022	Elected representatives	Waratah-Wynyard (7), Circular Head (1)
30 March 2022	Staff	Burnie (1), Waratah-Wynyard (9), Circular Head (4)
30 March 2022	Elected representatives	George Town (3), Launceston (3), Northern Midlands (2), Dorset (3), West Tamar (1),Glamorgan (2), Kentish (1)
12 April 2022	Elected representatives	Break O'Day (2), Central Coast (3), Waratah-Wynyard (1), Devonport (5), Latrobe (3)
13 April 2022	Staff	Central Coast (3), Devonport (6), Latrobe (2)
13 April 2022	Staff	George Town (4), Launceston (14), Meander Valley (3), West Tamar (3)
3 May 2022	Staff	Tasman (2), Glenorchy (4), Huon Valley (5), Clarence (4), Hobart (14), Brighton (1), Sorell (2), Kingborough (3), Central Highlands (1)
3 May 2022	Elected representatives	Tasman (1), Glenorchy (1), Clarence (2), Brighton (1), Sorell (2), Derwent Valley (1)
5 May 2022	Online Forum - Staff	Kingborough (2), Glenorchy (3), Break O'Day Council (2) Tasman (3), Central Coast (1), West Coast (1), Launceston (3), Hobart (1)
5 May 2022	Online Forum – elected representatives	Glenorchy (2), Central Coast (1), Break O'Day (1), Glamorgan Spring Bay (1), Tasman (1)
6 May 2022	Elected representatives and staff	King Island (3), Flinders Island (3)

Appendix 3: Governance Documents:

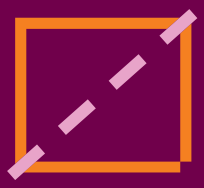
The Future of Local Government Review

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Local Government Board is committed to leading the Review in a way that builds community trust and confidence. As part of this process, the Board has endorsed and is publicly committing to five *Guiding Principles*.

These Principles act as a clear statement of intent and will inform how the Board goes about its work over the next 18 months. The Principles, and what they mean for the Review, are outlined below.

TRANSPARENT



The Board will be open about how it is undertaking the Review. It will provide regular updates on progress as the Review proceeds so that the community understands what we are doing, where we are going, and why.

INDEPENDENT

The Board is committed to conducting the Review free from political constraints and undue influence by the State Government, the local government sector or other stakeholder groups. For all stakeholders and the broader community to accept and own the outcomes from the Review, they must be confident that they have been developed in an independent and objective way.

CONSULTATIVE AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED

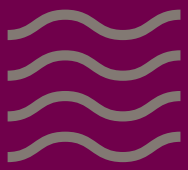
The Board will conduct its Review in a way that provides for broad, genuine, and representative stakeholder and community engagement. No stakeholder group will have a disproportionate level of input or 'special access' to the Board. The Board is particularly keen to hear from everyday Tasmanians about their experiences, perceptions, and aspirations for the future, and the role they see local government playing in and for their communities into the future.

EVIDENCE-DRIVEN

The Board will build on the evidence flowing from community consultation and engage with a range of expert partners in undertaking the Review. This will bring in the knowledge, skills, expertise, and experience that will be necessary to ensure all its findings and recommendations are supported by clear and strong evidence. Together with its partners, the Board will deploy best practice research, analysis, and engagement methods and practices throughout the entirety of the Review.

INNOVATIVE AND FUTURE FOCUSED

The Board is open to reform options that challenge existing structures and paradigms in the interests of promoting the best outcomes for the Tasmanian community. We want stakeholders and community members to be bold and creative in their vision for the future of the local government sector in Tasmania. While it will be essential that we consider the history and evolution of our current set of arrangements in local government, the present shape and structure of the sector will not constrain the Board's consideration of new, novel, and innovative reform possibilities where it believes this could deliver better outcomes.



Let's All Shape the Future of Local Government.

The Future of Local Government Review

REVIEW THEMES

The scope of the Review is broad and forward-looking. The Board has decided to organise its areas of inquiry into seven broad theme areas, which are based around the services that local governments in Tasmania currently deliver. The seven themes are summarised below. Attachment A sets out in more detail the kinds of council activities and services that are included under each theme.

The themes will help structure the consultation, research, and analysis work of the Review. However, the Board also acknowledges that no categorisation is perfect. Councils undertake a diverse range of activities, and sometimes operate differently in how they interact with, and provide services to, their local communities.

The Board wants stakeholders and community members to contribute their ideas for the future of local government, irrespective of whether they cut across multiple theme areas, or neatly fit into any category.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Including emergency management, health and community programs, cultural activities and facilities

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & LOCAL PROMOTION

Including tourism, advocacy for the local community

ENVIRONMENT

Including waste management, natural resource management, animal control

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Including rates, charges and financial management, council workforce, shared service arrangements

GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY & REPRESENTATION

Including councillors, council information

INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION & MANAGEMENT

Including roads and bridges, stormwater, halls, parks

LAND USE PLANNING & OTHER REGULATORY SERVICES

Including building and development approvals, heritage, public health standards

Let's All Shape the Future of Local Government.

ATTACHMENT A

Review Themes and Local Government Activities and Services

THEME	INCLUDES	
Community wellbeing	• Museums and galleries • Public art • Community events, markets and festivals • Community support services for vulnerable people • Social welfare	• Support for community volunteer, sport and cultural groups • Emergency and disaster management and recovery • Public health/medical services • Transport accessibility
Economic development and local promotion	• Local economic development • Tourism	• Advocacy on behalf of the community
Environment	• Tips and transfer stations • Garbage collection • Recycling • Cleaning public areas • Animal control	• Catchment/natural resource management • Weed control • Land reserves
Finance and administration	• Group purchasing schemes • Shared service arrangements • Rates and charges	• Financial management • Council workforce
Governance, accountability and representation	• Provision of information from council • Community engagement in decision-making	• Contact with councillors about local issues
Infrastructure provision and management	• Roads and bridges • Community halls • Parks, gardens and playgrounds • Recreation and aquatic centres, sports facilities, and campgrounds • Street lighting • Cycle paths, footpaths, pedestrian areas	• Drains and stormwater maintenance and repairs • Public toilets • Local traffic • Parking • Airports, sea ports, jetties, wharves
Land use planning and other regulatory services	• Land use planning • Planning and building permits • Local heritage	• Environmental protection/ pollution control • Food and other public health standards

Appendix 4: Review Theme Fact Sheets

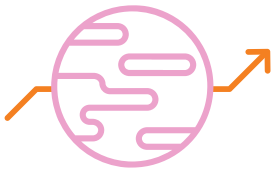
Introduction

The Board has prepared and published a series of short fact sheets to help support consultation and engagement on the Stage 1 Interim Report. The fact sheets are a snapshot summary of the seven review themes that formed the basis of community engagement and research for Stage 1. They outline the current roles and functions of councils and why they are important.

In our main Report, we have identified a set of issues, challenges and opportunities that relate to each of the theme areas covered by fact sheets. To learn more, and to have your say on what the Board has learned so far, please visit www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au.

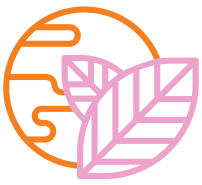
Community wellbeing

Including emergency management, health and community programs, cultural activities and facilities



Economic development & local promotion

Including tourism, advocacy for the local community



Environment

Including waste management, natural resource management, animal control

Finance & administration

Including rates, charges and financial management, council workforce, shared service arrangements

Governance, accountability & representation

Including councillors, council information

Infrastructure provision & management

Including roads and bridges, stormwater, halls, parks

Land use planning & other regulatory services

Including building and development approvals, heritage, public health standards

Community Wellbeing

Context

In recent years, governments at all levels have increasingly focused on measuring and promoting 'wellbeing' as a more holistic way of supporting their communities to be healthy and happy. In May 2022, Premier Rockliff announced that the Tasmanian Government would be developing the State's first Wellbeing Framework. That framework will focus on the full range of determinants for community wellbeing, including economic activity and participation, health (including mental health), housing, education, physical safety, and community connection.

Almost everything councils do – responding to the needs of their residents and shaping the places they live - can contribute to the wellbeing of the community. The infrastructure they provide can support healthy lifestyles, the economic development they promote can create local jobs, and their planning decisions can create beautiful places to live and work.

As well as this broad contribution to wellbeing, councils deliver important health and community services. These can include general programs to improve physical and mental health, targeted social programs for vulnerable people such as seniors and children, and public safety activities such as disaster preparedness and recovery.

Local government role and functions

Councils have important statutory responsibilities that relate directly to the broader concept of community wellbeing. Specifically:

- The functions of councils in the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act) include providing for "the health, safety and welfare of the community". A council's annual plan must include strategies to achieve its public health goals, and the annual report must state the council's objectives for public health, the resources allocated, and the extent to which the council met the needs of its residents.
- *The Public Health Act 1997* requires councils to develop and implement strategies to promote and improve public health, including an immunisation program.
- *The Emergency Management Act 2006* requires councils to provide all resources and facilities necessary to manage an emergency in their municipal area. Tasmania's Emergency Management Arrangements under this Act describe the relationships between councils and the relevant State Government agencies.

In practice, these responsibilities result in councils delivering a broad range of 'wellbeing' functions and services. For example, councils:

- Provide **mental and physical health programs**, as well as public health information and referral services
- Provide services to **vulnerable members of the community**, such as childcare, activities for young people and programs for seniors
- Provide **social services** for those experiencing disadvantage or social isolation, such as community transport and volunteer programs
- Provide **recreational programs and infrastructure** to promote public health, such as playing fields, pools and cycleways
- **Build community cohesion and cultural life**, through events, markets and festivals, arts and culture programs, and museums and galleries
- Support local **emergency management** and coordinate community disaster recovery
- Influence the built environment through **land-use planning**, creating open space and tree canopies, and encouraging active transport.

State Government agencies also support councils' wellbeing activities in various ways. For example, the Tasmanian Department of State Growth provides grants for sport and recreation, and arts and culture.

Economic Development and Local Promotion

Context

Local economic development is an increasingly complex, collaborative, and often contested practice, with each of the three tiers of government, business, and community stakeholders supporting and driving development within municipalities, regions, and Tasmania more broadly.

Through its local representatives, and its proximity to the community, councils are well placed to understand the key economic drivers, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for their communities. Councils bring a unique insight into their local area's natural advantages, as well as its constraints.

From this position, councils undertake a range of functions, services and activities that aim to increase local economic activity, and in doing so support improved community wellbeing, amenity, sustainability, resilience, and quality of life. They also play a key role in constructing local economic advantage through building skills, connections, and human capital.

Councils achieve things through both active, focused effort, such as the delivery of programs to attract specific investment and economic activity, and through councils' broader services and regulatory processes. For instance:

- The efficiency and consistency of councils' process for assessing, approving, and setting conditions on development and business permit applications contributes to the investment appeal of their municipality;
- Councils build and maintain strategic relationships with key industries, businesses, state government, councils and economic development bodies to promote economic growth and diversity;
- Based on extensive local knowledge and community connections, councils are well placed to construct regional economic advantage by providing a bridging function in networks and supply chains. In this way, councils can function as the vital 'connective tissue' between the private sector, workers, civic or non-government organisations, and other tiers of government;
- Councils provide and maintain a wide range of economic and community infrastructure and services, which support economic activity and participation, and promote their municipality as a desirable place to live and visit; and
- Councils can and do provide direct support to prospective developers or investors in the form of 'rates holidays' or other forms of support.

Local government role and functions

Tasmanian councils have a broad legislative mandate to undertake 'economic development' activities under the *Local Government Act 1993*, which requires councils to "represent and promote the interests of the community."

Council economic development and local promotion activity is generally guided by plans, strategies and frameworks developed by individual councils which focus on things like attracting tourists and new residents, supporting new residential and commercial property development, and attracting, retaining, and growing specific industries. Councils engage in a range of activities linked to these strategies, which include:

- **branding and promotion** (e.g., marketing councils' natural and competitive advantages for investment)
- **permits and regulation** (e.g., assessing, approving, and setting conditions on development and business permit applications)
- **advocacy and collaboration** with other levels of Government, on investment at the local level
- **maintaining strategic relationships** with industry, other levels of government and other councils
- **infrastructure investment** (both economic and community infrastructure)

- provision of direct **support to prospective developers/investors** (e.g., rates 'holidays' or other forms of support)
- **administration and maintenance** of key facilities (e.g., airports and aerodromes, jetties, cemeteries, parking facilities).

Collectively, Tasmanian councils also jointly fund and own four regional development organisations: the Northern Tasmania Development Corporation (NTDC), the Cradle Coast Authority (CCA), the South East Region Development Association (SERDA) and the Southern Tasmanian Councils Association (STCA). These organisations support their member councils in taking consolidated action to address shared issues and progress economic growth for Tasmania on a regional scale.

Economic development is also supported by Federal and State Government through funding mechanisms and functions of key organisations, including Regional Development Australia and the Tasmanian Department of State Growth.

Environment

Context

Tasmanians place significant value on their natural environment, which is central to communities' everyday lives, as well as the State's branding in tourism, agricultural and other markets.

Local government plays a key advocacy and partnership role in the development and delivery of local, state, and national strategies in areas of environmental concern, including waste management, the circular economy, and climate change.

As our environment changes, there is growing demand for councils to deliver sustainability initiatives at the local level. Councils need strong leadership and expertise to factor the effects of climate change into their core business and environmental service responsibilities, such as conservation and infrastructure provision and management.

Local government role and functions

Tasmanian councils have a broad range of statutory powers and responsibilities for environmental management, protection, and regulation. The key elements of the legislative framework that govern councils' roles and functions are set out below:

- The Local Government Act 1993 authorises the broad range of powers and functions councils hold. In particular, it specifies that providing for the health, safety, and welfare of the community is a key function of councils.
- The Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 (EMPCA) prescribes councils' regulatory powers to prevent or control pollution. It also gives councils the power to issue Environmental Protection Notices to businesses or individuals who are causing environmental harm.
- The Litter Act 2007 authorises council officers to take action against people found littering.
- The Weed Management Act 1999 requires councils to develop and execute weed management plans, which provide practical frameworks and strategic priorities for the management of weeds in councils' municipal areas.
- The Public Health Act 1997 enables councils to appoint Environmental Health Officers to undertake key community-level environmental management tasks, including assessing water quality.

Some of the broad functions that councils undertake to preserve their local environment include:

- **waste management** (tips and transfer stations, garbage collection, recycling, public litter control).
- **land management** (reserves, parks)
- **natural resource management** (strategic planning, weed control)
- **catchment and biodiversity management** (water quality assessment)
- **domestic animal management** (dog and cat control).

Waste management activities in particular are seen as 'core business' for local government, with all 29 councils individually or collectively providing kerbside collection, public waste and recycling bins, landfill disposal and recycling sorting; and litter and waste education, prevention, enforcement, and clean-up activities,

Finance and Administration

Context

As with any level of government, sound financial management and competent and professional public administration are essential at the local council level to ensure that all public funds are spent efficiently, effectively, and transparently.

The local government sector employs close to 3,500 full time equivalent employees, with total operating revenues of about $900 million annually, and assets worth about $11.5 billion. In 2020-21, Tasmanian councils collected over $500 million in rates and levied $144 million in other fees and charges.

Councils also receive significant funding in the form of grants and transfers from the State and Australian Governments ($126 million in 2020-21), both on a recurrent basis, and for specific projects and programs.

It is essential that local government extracts the maximum social and economic benefit to the community from all the funds it receives.

Sound public administration also benefits council staff. More capable and mature organisations provide better working environments, including for skills development, promotion opportunities, and depth and diversity of work.

Local government role and function

To allow councils to deliver services to their communities, they have broad powers to raise revenue (through property rates and charges), borrow money, enter contracts, and employ staff.

The *Local Government Act 1993* establishes a robust financial management and administrative framework for councils. It requires councils to undertake particular **financial planning and reporting** functions, and to **consult, involve and be accountable** to their communities.

Councillors are collectively responsible for setting and monitoring the **council's strategic plan**. Strategic plans are developed through community consultation, set a council's future direction and balance its resources. They also ensure that a council can fairly distribute the costs related to **planned services and infrastructure**.

Councils can **levy rates and charge fees** for some services in accordance with their rates and charges policy.

Councils are **accountable to their communities** for their financial and administrative performance. Councils are required to monitor their performance against their strategic plans, using **evaluation tools** such as their annual reports. Councils must hold an Annual General Meeting which is open to the public.

All councils must also establish an audit panel, which reviews the council's performance in relation to:

- the council's financial system, financial governance arrangements and financial management;
- the council's strategic plan, annual plan, long-term financial management plan and long-term strategic asset management plan; and
- all policies, systems and controls the council has in place to safeguard its long-term financial position.

Finally, councils' financial statements must be submitted annually to be audited by the Auditor-General in accordance with the Audit Act 2008. The Auditor-General reports to Parliament each year on the audit of local council financial statements and conducts financial and performance audits of councils for specific functions, services and programs.

Governance, Accountability and Representation

Context

Governance, accountability, and representation underpins everything councils do. It includes the way councillors are elected and the quality of that representation, through to the guiding principles and accountability measures that are (or should) be in place. It is this formal representative role – a genuine democratic mandate to speak on behalf of local people whose needs the councillors understand – that sets councils apart from other local community organisations.

It is important that communities can trust their local decision makers to act in their best interests and manage their municipalities with skill, integrity and transparency. This trust becomes the foundation that allows councils to successfully engage with their communities and ensure they are advocating on the issues that are important to them.

There have been ongoing concerns with some councillor behaviour, workplace culture and non-compliance with the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act). The State Government and the Local Government Association of Tasmania are undertaking considerable work to address these conduct concerns.

Governance, accountability, and representation extends beyond issues of behaviour to include structural considerations. These include, for example, the number of councillors elected to represent each area, the measures in place to attract and retain quality local government candidates, and the reporting measures used to ensure accountability and transparency.

Local government role and functions

The *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act) provides the legislative framework for council governance, outlining a range of functions, including:

- councillor **numbers** and **remuneration**;
- **functions and powers** of councils and councillors;
- processes and procedures for the conduct of **council elections**;
- strategic planning requirements;
- financial management **rules and standards** and the establishment of audit panels that **review financial performance**;
- requirements for councils establishing **single and joint authorities**;
- standards for **ethical decision-making**, including the appropriate management of gifts and donations;
- public **reporting** requirements; and
- a **monitoring and compliance framework**, including investigation powers and interventions available to the Director of Local Government and Minister to respond to alleged breaches of the LG Act.

The LG Act's governance framework is supported by subordinate legislation which establishes a framework for procedures and other management reporting requirements.

Councils are also bound by the legislative provisions of the Audit Act 2008 for financial reporting and audit, and the Integrity Commission Act 2009 for complaints of misconduct.

Infrastructure Provision and Management

Context

Infrastructure planning, provision and management is a core strategic, financial, and operational focus for councils. Tasmania's current system of local government means that even rural councils with small rates bases, and workforces will nonetheless have significant asset management responsibilities, particularly for local roads.

The provision, management, and maintenance of council assets has a bearing on many social, economic, and environmental outcomes across the country. It also relates to several other Review themes. For instance:

- Councils are responsible for a significant amount of Tasmania's passenger transport and freight routes, owning and managing around 80 per cent of Tasmania's total road network. Well-maintained local roads support both safety and economic productivity.
- Councils can play a strong, positive role in planning urban and suburban environments to support a range of wellbeing objectives, particularly through the provision of well-designed and planned infrastructure
- The design and provision of stormwater infrastructure protects local communities from the impacts of extreme wet-weather events, which are predicted to increase with the effects of climate change.

Local government role and function

Tasmania's 29 councils are responsible for planning, building, managing and maintaining a range of essential economic and community infrastructure. In total, councils manage assets valued at over $11 billion. Capital investment by the sector over the past four years has totaled $1.19 billion.

Tasmanian councils are typically responsible for:

- Local roads, bridges, culverts, footpaths and cycleways;
- Stormwater systems;
- Carparks;
- Waste management infrastructure;
- Boat ramps and jetties; and
- Local community infrastructure such as halls, galleries, playgrounds, parks, pools and sports grounds, public toilets and barbecues.

Councils' main roles as infrastructure provider, owner, and manager are governed by several pieces of legislation:

- The *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act) provides a framework for councils to **build and maintain its infrastructure assets** (through purchasing land, raising rates, levying charges, borrowing money) and also sets out the **minimum strategic planning and reporting requirements** for council asset management functions.
- Councils' management of local roads is governed by the Roads and Jetties Act 1935 and the Local Government (Highways) Act 1982. These Acts provide councils with broad powers to **construct, maintain and manage of local roads**.
- The Urban Drainage Act 2013 makes councils directly responsible for providing **drainage to their urban areas**, developing a stormwater management plan and empowers councils to operate and protect its stormwater management systems and infrastructure.

While councils have broad discretion in how they prioritise and provide infrastructure in response to community needs, that infrastructure needs to meet relevant minimum engineering standards.

Planning and other Regulatory Functions

Context

Councils play a pivotal role in the Tasmanian planning system, leading strategic land-use planning for their council area and acting as the approval authority for new developments. Councils also have other local regulatory responsibilities, such as ensuring cafes and restaurants maintain food hygiene standards.

This regulatory role gives councils a major influence over their local environment, local economy, and the community. For large developments, the decisions made by one council can impact neighbouring councils and the broader Tasmanian community and economy.

Over the last 30 years, Tasmania's planning system has been evolving from one with different development controls in each council, towards more consistent approaches, common standards and regional and state-level objectives. The Review is a timely opportunity to check whether the structures of local government still serve this emerging model.

Local government role and function

The Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (LUPAA) defines councils' role in the Tasmanian land use planning system, providing for:

- **Tasmanian Planning Policies**
- **Regional Land Use Strategies**
- **the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and**
- **enforcement of planning control.**

Councils are responsible for applying LUPAA in their municipal area, and in particular, for issuing permits for new developments. As part of this approval role, councils consider sensitive matters such as heritage under the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*, and regulate impacts on stormwater systems under the *Urban Drainage Act 2013*. Councils are also the principal approval and compliance authority for building permits under the *Building Act 2016*, ensuring compliance with the National Construction Code.

A set of planning reforms are currently underway in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Planning Scheme is progressively replacing each council's interim planning scheme with new zoning maps and special provisions for unique places and local issues. As of June 2022, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme is operating in 13 councils.

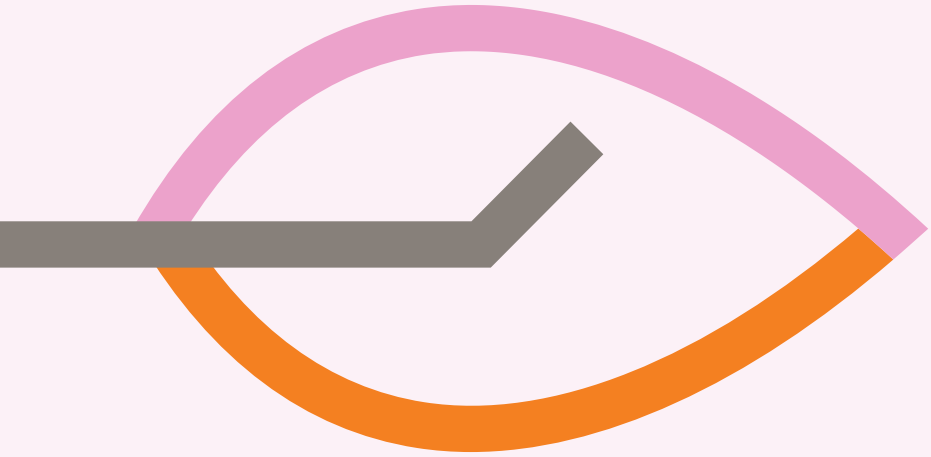
By default, all significant development falls to the relevant council for assessment and approval regardless of its scale or complexity, unless the Minister refers it to a major projects approval pathway, or the Parliament refers it to a pathway for major infrastructure development or projects of state significance.

Councils have a range of other regulatory functions. The *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act) enables councils to make by-laws in every area of their legislative functions. In response to the Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation, the Government has agreed to develop model by-laws for common issues and reduce the administrative process councils must go through to adopt them, leading to greater State-wide consistency.

Other significant regulatory responsibilities of councils include:

- managing the **ownership and control of dogs** under the Dog Control Act 2000
- managing low-medium impact **pollution impacts and enforcing noise regulations** under the EMPCA
- ensuring food businesses comply with **food safety requirements** under the Food Act 2003
- **regulating unhealthy premises** under the Public Health Act 1997
- **prohibiting littering** in public places under the Litter Act 2007.

The future of local government review



Tasmanian Government

Department of Premier and Cabinet

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