

# Future of Local Government Review

## Stage 1 Interim Report Engagement Overview

The future of  
local  
government  
review



# Stage 1 Interim Report Engagement Overview

The Tasmanian Government has asked the Local Government Board (the Board) to review the role, function, and design of local government in Tasmania so that our councils are ready for the future. Our job is to look closely at how local councils are working now and make recommendations to the Government about what we think needs to change.

On 29 June 2022, we presented our findings from our program of community and stakeholder engagement and research undertaken as part of Stage 1 of the Review to the Minister for Local Government. These key findings are summarised in the Review's [Stage 1 Community Update](#).

## ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The release of the Stage 1 Interim Report was supported by a more than 5-week engagement period, from 21 July to 29 August 2022. During this period written submissions were invited from members of the public and stakeholders in response to four sets of questions regarding the key findings and outputs of the Report. These questions sought individual, organisation and council views and ideas on the [future role for local government](#), [capability and outcome aspirations](#), [opportunities issues and challenges](#), and the [priority reform areas](#) for focus in Stage 2. Submissions were received both through an online engagement portal and direct email to us.

This initial engagement activity was part of a broader program of engagement being undertaken as part of Stage 2 of the Review.

Further opportunities are being provided for the community, key stakeholders and the local government sector to contribute to the development of targeted reform options for the sector as the Review progresses.

Overall, we received **82 submissions** from 46 members of the public spread across the four series of questions as follows:

- 30 submissions on the future role for local government
- 14 submissions on the capability and outcome aspirations
- 11 submissions on opportunities, issues and challenges for local government
- 27 submissions on the priority reform areas.

In addition, the Board received **18 submissions** from councils and **two submissions** from Mayors. These submissions represent a mix of rural and urban councils with coverage from across Tasmania. We also received **three submissions** from peak organisations in Tasmania. These submissions were all received via email directly to the Board.

In accordance with the [Tasmanian Government Public Submissions Policy](#), all submissions are published on the [Review's website](#).

The accompanying papers present a descriptive summary and analysis of the findings from the Interim Report engagement, identifying the key trends identified across:

- [Paper 1 - public submissions made via our online portal and email](#)
- [Paper 2 - council and peak body submissions made via email](#)

## OUR REFLECTIONS ON SUBMISSIONS

We have been pleased by the response to the Interim Report and impressed by the effort that councils in particular have put into engaging with the complex issues and ideas we have put forward. Submissions have responded in a positive and considered way to our broad and open approach to reform possibilities.

Broadly, a consensus is emerging that the status quo is not sustainable, and there are significant opportunities to build a stronger local government sector. There has been support from the public, peak organisations and the sector on our visions for the future capabilities for local government and the reform areas which we are exploring in Stage 2. We have also received a range of additional suggestions and comments on where councils can improve how they deliver for their communities

We have also received support for the opportunities, issues and challenges discussed in our Report. This gives us confidence that our focus areas for exploration in Stage 2 will deliver longstanding and meaningful reforms for local government in Tasmania.

### *The role of local government*

We observe that there are contested views relating to the role of local government. This includes both how prescriptive the role should be, and what it should entail.

We have identified that there is broad consensus for a clear, detailed role statement for local government, both for councils and their communities. However, we note that some councils are concerned that an overly prescriptive role statement may limit their ability to fill local service gaps, and key services may disappear from regional areas.

Additionally, reflecting the growing recognition across Tasmania, and the rest of Australia, that local government's role is shifting to a greater focus on providing services to people and communities, many councils have told us that they want greater recognition and funding to support the expansion of their role into the domain of community wellbeing.

However, a small number of council submissions have observed that they believe councils' role should re-focus on a 'traditional' set of services centered around infrastructure management.

From what we have heard and learnt through our engagement and research, the argument that councils should return to a narrower role as manager of local infrastructure and provider of 'services to property' is generally not accepted by the community, the sector, or other key stakeholders. We have observed a broad acknowledgment that councils are best placed to provide tailored, place-based services to meet the shifting needs of their communities, but need to be better supported to do this.

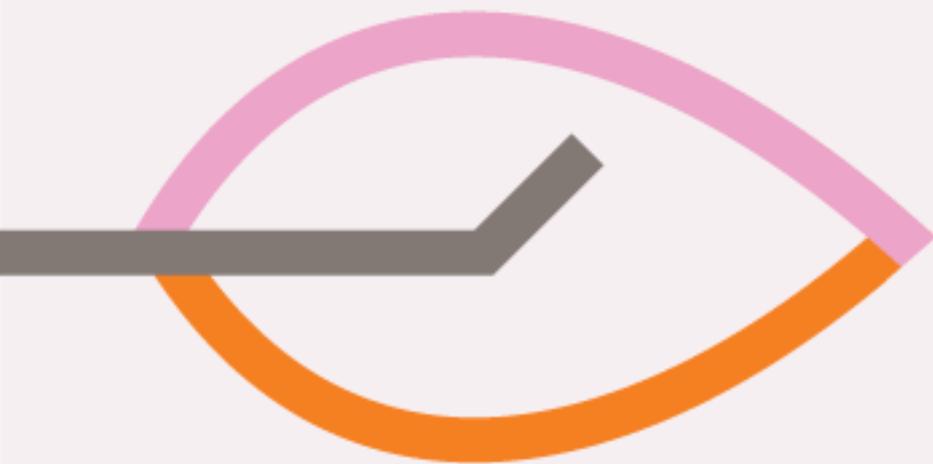
These tensions highlight to us how crucial it will be to build consensus on a role which gives clarity on councils' functions and services, while still providing individual councils with some flexibility to respond to individual community needs and issues.

### ***Achieving scale***

Through the submissions, a number of councils have proactively proposed consolidation models as a means of realising scale economies and addressing capacity and capability issues.

We observe that there are two main views emerging towards achieving scale economies – through centralisation of more ‘generic’ services into shared entities, or through establishing fewer, larger councils across Tasmania – with councils expressing preference for one position or the other.

We note that whilst this is another point of contention, the sector should be acknowledged for its important participation in this Review, and for proactively proposing and embracing potential models for change.



**More information?**  
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