

# FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

## by Central Highlands Council

### Reform Outcome 1

#### **1.1 Establish a Tasmanian Local Government Charter which summarises councils' role and obligations and establishes a practical set of decision-making principles for councils.**

**We support this option;** if it provides clear and defined responsibilities as well as who provides the funding to undertake these roles.

#### **1.2 Embed community wellbeing considerations into key council strategic planning and service delivery processes.**

**We support this option;** Council believes this should currently being addressed at all different levels. Central Highlands Council has a 5-year Health & Wellbeing Plan for our community which is funded by an annual budget.

We note the State Government developed a Tasmanian Wellbeing Framework. This is a welcome initiative. Amongst other considerations it would allow us to benchmark our local resident wellbeing status relative to other LGA's in the State. It would also provide an evidential base when applying for State and Federal development funds. We note too that the gathering of local data to support community wellbeing indicators would be a fresh impost on many LGA's. They need to be appropriately resourced to make such data collections.

#### **1.3 Require councils to undertake Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) for significant new services or infrastructure.**

**We support this option in principle.** This is best financial management practice to identify future and ongoing costs. The impacts on new services or infrastructure goes beyond the financial impact of councils, hence we must consider social and environmental concerns as well.

### Reform Outcome 2

#### **2.1 Develop an improved councillor training framework which will require participation in candidate pre-election sessions and, if elected, ongoing councillor professional development.**

**We support this option** - The existing online courses for intending and elected councillors would make a good basis for councillors' personal development. There should be elements which are compulsory to be undertaken.

## **2.2 Review the number of councillors representing a council area and the remuneration provided.**

**We support this option** - This is a worthy objective to be undertaken.

Remuneration for elected members should be reviewed.

## **2.3 Review statutory sanctions and dismissal powers.**

**We support this option.**

## **2.4 Establish systems and methods to support equitable and comprehensive representation of communities.**

**No comment.**

# **Reform Outcome 3**

## **3.1 Require consistent, contemporary community engagement strategies.**

**We support this option.**

This is a worthy objective. To counter the dominance of voice from relatively small sectors of our communities, the State Office of Local Government could provide consultation mechanisms and methods that enable a broad spread of residents to have a voice in relation to local issues.

## **3.2 Establish a public-facing performance reporting, monitoring and management framework.**

**We support this option.**

## **3.3 Establish clear performance-based benchmarks and review 'triggers' based on the performance framework.**

**We support this option.**

# **Reform Outcome 4**

## **4.1 Implement a shared state and local government workforce development strategy.**

**We support this option.**

## **4.2 Target key skills shortages, such as planners, in a sector-wide or shared State/local government workforce plan.**

**We support this option.**

#### **4.3 Establish virtual regional teams of regulatory staff to provide a shared regulatory capability.**

**No comment.**

## **Reform Outcome 5**

### **5.1 Deconflict the role of councillors and the role of planning authorities**

**We support this option BUT** as said the role of councillors are “to represent the community” and does often conflict with the role of planning authorities. Public education on this role needs greater attention as Councillors definitely found it difficult to participate in important public debates about major developments in their Municipality for fear of ‘pre-judging’ development applications or being accused of bias in the assessment process. There is a lack of public understanding of this role.

#### **5.1a Refer complex planning development applications to independent assessment panels appointed by the Tasmanian Government.**

**We support this option.** Clear, strong Statewide guidelines or assessment process of what is a ‘complex’ development would need to be developed. But a local element/component should form part of this process at the beginning.

#### **5.1b Remove councillors’ responsibility for determining development applications.**

**We do not support this option.** The local voice will be lost.

#### **5.1c Develop guidelines for the consistent delegation of development applications to council staff.**

**We support this option.**

### **5.2 Greater transparency and consistency of councils’ resourcing and implementation of regulatory functions.**

**We support this option BUT** who will fund these functions to be kept to an acceptable standard. They are State legislation which Local Government manage on their behalf.

### **5.3 Increase support for the implementation of regulatory processes, including support provided by the State Government.**

**We support this option BUT again** this will need financial support from the State Government. There needs to be an escalation of issues/complaints which eventually reaches a State Government body which provides the final say.

#### **5.4 Strengthen connections between councils' strategic planning and strategic land-use planning by working with State and Commonwealth Governments.**

**We support this option.**

### **Reform Outcome 6**

#### **6.1 Require councils to collaborate with others in their region, and with State Government, on regional strategies for specific agreed issues.**

**We support this option.** We are already participating in a Sub-Region Group and a Southern Regional Group (STCA). Yes, this is voluntary membership however, all members should have an equal say.

#### **6.2 Establish stronger, formalised partnerships between State and local government on long-term regional, place-based wellbeing and economic development programs.**

**We support this option.**

#### **6.3 Introduce regional collaboration frameworks for planning and designing grant-dependent regional priorities.**

**We support this option.** Eg. Majority arterial roads can run through several Council areas; many social support services do not and cannot be bound by Council boundaries. Hence collaboration with neighbouring Councils is essential.

#### **6.4 Support increased integration (including co-location) of 'front desk' services between local and state governments at the community level.**

**No Comment.**

### **Reform Outcome 7**

#### **7.1 Explore how councils are utilising sound taxation principles in the distribution of the overall rating requirement across their communities.**

**We support this option.**

#### **7.2 Enhance public transparency of rating policy changes.**

**We support this option.** This should be occurring already.

**7.3 Examine opportunities for improving councils' use of cost-based user charges to reduce the incidence of ratepayers subsidising services available to all ratepayers, but not used by them all.**

**We support this option.** Many fee-for-service base activities eg. Waste management should be on a user pays basis which we currently do. Financial analysis should be open to cover costs and/or capital improvements only – not for profit making purposes.

**7.4 Consider options for increasing awareness and understanding of the methodology and impacts of the State Grants Commission's distribution of Federal Assistance Grants.**

**We support this option.** More education is needed for elected members.

**7.5 Investigate possible alternative approaches to current rating models, which might better support councils to respond to Tasmania's changing demographic profile.**

**We support this option.**

## **Reform Outcome 8**

**8.1 Standardise asset life ranges for major asset classes and increase transparency and oversight of changes to asset lives.**

**We support this option.**

**8.2 Introduce requirement for councils to undertake and publish 'full life-cycle' cost estimates of new infrastructure projects**

**We support this option.**

**8.3 Introduce a requirement for councils to undertake regular service reviews for existing services.**

**We support this option.**

**8.4 Support councils to standardise core asset management systems, processes, and software.**

**We support this option BUT** it must be affordable and fit for purpose to the individual Council needs/requirements.