

18<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Ms S Smith  
Chairperson  
Local Government Board  
LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au

**Future of local government review – stage 2 options report feedback**

Dear Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Board's Stage 2 Options Report.

Are we against Councils who are empowered to shape communities, engage residents in local decision making, and improve wellbeing and prosperity?

As noted in Option Paper: Appendix page 21 (Priority Reform Outcome 5, Option 5.1) the perception of conflict is only perceived in a small number of development applications and only limited to elected members' desire to participate in the public debate about specific projects. It appears they feel this deprives them of the opportunity to influence the outcome, while in reality they are the decision-making body and the ones that should be listening to the community and not telling them.

The existing system creates an environment where councillors have the responsibility necessary to make planning decisions on behalf of the community and accountability to the residents who are impacted (positively or negatively) by those decisions. Removing part or all of this responsibility from council (as outlined in Option 5.1a and 5.1b) creates a dysfunctional system where those responsible for the decisions are not directly accountable to those being impacted by the decisions. In terms of impact, both options are equivalent as Option 5.1a removes responsibility for the types of development that would have the most significant impacts on community.

Planning decisions are a major lever through which the nature of communities is shaped and can have wide reaching impacts on how communities develop and on the health and wellbeing of residents. Removing this lever from Councils would place a significant limit on their ability to deliver the role of Council (as defined in page 20 of the Options Paper) specifically, "supporting wellbeing as 'core business' by capturing "a range of factors and circumstances that enable us to live a 'good life", to "embed community wellbeing into key council strategic planning and service delivery processes (Options Paper page 25), and to represent, support, and strengthen communities to "enable wellbeing and prosperity"(Options Paper page 28).

This could also create a scenario where we have organisations working at cross purposes. Council planning decisions are complex decisions that need to be grounded in a strong and nuanced understanding of the local context, both in terms of community vision and values, the nature of development, the planning scheme, existing infrastructure, and long-term plans for the provision of infrastructure and resources. As the majority of this knowledge and expertise exists in council, this is the most efficient environment to bring this together to provide informed and robust decision making that balances the needs to the municipality with those of the residents.

Additional guidelines on delegation as presented in Option 5.1c would be beneficial. Clarity of expectations and best practices is always beneficial.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch on [marisol.miro.quesada@sorell.tas.gov.au](mailto:marisol.miro.quesada@sorell.tas.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,

Marisol Miró Quesada  
Sorell Councillor