

Future of Local Government Review

GPO Box 123

HOBART, TASMANIA 7001

2 August 2023

To whom it may concern,

RE: Climate change submission to the local government review - Stage 2 Interim Report and Community Catchment Information Packs

My individual submission to the Local Government reform mainly comes from a climate change action lens, having worked in the field for 16 years, mostly in various local government climate change roles in Tasmania and for Australian Government climate change agencies.

The local government review must include measures to enable greater mandatory climate change action across local government. Given the urgent need to respond to this issue climate change action should not get lost amongst the myriad of other issues associated with the Local Government Reform.

Many jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand have shown that legislation and regulation are the most effective tools for implementing lasting action and to institutionalise climate action as business as usual.

As part of the local government reform the Local Government Act 1993 is likely to be reviewed and updated to reflect the changing purpose of local government. The next iteration of the legislation that guides local government in Tasmania must include clear statements that councils:

- must act on climate change in both mitigation (reducing emissions) and adaptation (responding to the impacts of climate change)
- should only enact actions within local government operational control, by clearly outlining the responsibilities of the state and federal government on climate action. For example, a lack of clarity in adaptation action increases risks to all governments.
- must report climate change action annually and publicly for transparency, which could include key performance indicators around:

Mitigation:

- annual greenhouse gas inventories, including energy summaries
- a corporate mitigation policy and energy action plan
- an overarching climate change strategy and action plan, including corporate and community emissions actions

Adaptation:

- annual corporate risk assessments
- annual review of the climate change actions in the corporate risk register

- a corporate adaptation policy and plan
 - overarching corporate and community adaptation actions
- comply with minimum standards - many other industries have minimum standards and it common across different disciplines for climate action, for example minimum thermal performance standards (and associated policies) to comply with the National Construction Code, minimum energy performance standards for appliances (star ratings) and new vehicles. This allows for various governments to enact action to meet a universal end goal, it also facilitates flexibility on meeting those goals. An example is the need for annual corporate greenhouse gas inventory reporting – this is industry standard across the globe and has various similar methods for meeting that goal.
 - general outcomes and strategies must be tailored locally, show existing shared service models, such as the Regional Climate Change Initiative, Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority, across 12 southern councils
 - build internal capacity with skills to meet rapidly evolving community climate action expectations through a climate change industry job growth fund
 - match capital works funding required to transition to low to zero carbon society through a legislated transition fund/entity that is governed by an independent board. This would speed up the transition of 40,000 energy using assets across Tasmania managed by local government, such as streetlighting, vehicle, sports facilities and offices
 - respond to an incentive scheme that encourages cross boundary solutions to transport, waste and regional planning issues that will unlock large scale solutions that pave the way to a low carbon future.

In response to boundary proposals and the issues identified in the community catchment information packs:

- Climate change action is largely absent, with climate change issues listed in just the Clarence area
- Climate change currently does and will continue to impact the most vulnerable communities, for example, emergency responses supersede municipal boundaries
- Encouraging staff employment from local areas does decrease transport emissions from larger to shorter distance travel
- Larger councils tend to have the finance mechanisms needed to fund the range of infrastructure, service delivery and community information material needed to support the transition to a low carbon world.

I look forward seeing climate change considerations incorporated into every possible aspect of the local government review board recommendations. Sincerely, Alison Johnson

Alison Johnson