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Dorset Council | Submission on Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances

We, the Mayor and Councillors of Dorset, welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Discussion Paper: *Reforms to Councillor Numbers and Allowances*. We commend the Government's proactive approach to strengthening local governance and broadly support the objectives and direction of the proposed reforms.

Support for Reform Objectives

We agree that Tasmania's current framework for determining councillor numbers and allowances is outdated and inconsistent. The proposed reforms offer a more equitable, transparent, and sustainable model that better reflects the evolving responsibilities of elected members and the diverse needs of our communities.

In particular, we note:

- **A fairer and more consistent framework:** The proposed scoring methodology based on population, infrastructure, development activity, and geographic factors provides a rational and transparent basis for determining councillor numbers and allowances across all councils. We encourage consideration of how representation can remain inclusive and reflective of the full breadth of community perspectives.
- **Improved remuneration:** Increasing allowances by an average of 14.25% is a welcome step that reflects the growing complexity of the councillor role. This will help attract and retain skilled candidates and support councillors in fulfilling their duties effectively.

- **Cost neutrality:** The reforms are designed to be cost-neutral overall, with savings from reduced councillor numbers funding the proposed allowance increases. This approach balances fiscal responsibility with the need for fair compensation.
- **Regular reviews:** Embedding a four-yearly review cycle into legislation will ensure the framework remains responsive to demographic and structural changes, providing long-term certainty and transparency for councils and communities alike.

Feedback on Key Consultation Issues

- **Quorum Management:** We acknowledge the potential challenges for councils with five members in maintaining a quorum. Mechanisms such as those used in Victoria—allowing decisions to be made in an alternative manner when conflicts of interest prevent quorum—should be considered to ensure continuity in governance.
- **Superannuation Contributions:** We are satisfied with the current arrangement whereby councillors receive a superannuation equivalent as part of their allowance. We believe this setup provides flexibility for councillors to manage their contributions according to individual circumstances, and that any changes should be carefully considered to preserve this flexibility while improving clarity.
- **Legislative Embedding of Methodology:** Including the methodology and review framework in legislation would provide clarity, consistency, and accountability in how councillor numbers and allowances are determined over time.

Conclusion

We believe these reforms represent a significant step forward in modernising Tasmania's local government sector. By aligning representation and remuneration with the realities of contemporary governance, the proposed framework will strengthen democratic legitimacy, improve councillor capacity, and deliver better outcomes for our communities.

We thank the Government for its consultative approach and look forward to continued engagement as these reforms progress.

Yours sincerely



RHYS BEATTIE
Mayor