

Introduction to local government

An introduction to local government
in Tasmania and the role and function
of a council.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
COUNCIL



Local
Government
Association
Tasmania

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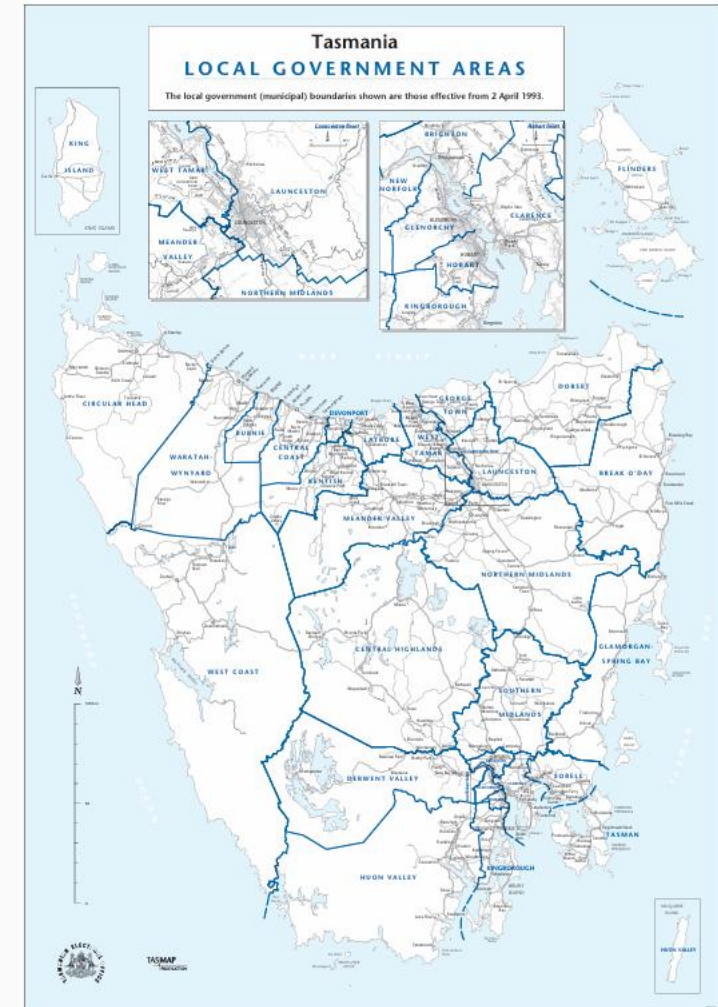
Tasmanian
Government

Tasmania's local government areas?

[View source
online \(map\)](#)

There are currently **29 local government areas**

- Councils provide a wide range of services for the wellbeing of the community.
- They provide and manage a wide range of infrastructure and services.
- They also have significant legislative responsibilities.
- Councils can provide a range of discretionary services in response to local community needs.



Council service delivery

Councils build, manage and deliver many services including:



Road and bridge
construction
and maintenance



Street lighting
and rubbish
collection



Stormwater
drainage



Traffic and
parking
regulation



Planning and
building services



Public health
inspections



Recreation
facilities,
parks and
reserves



Bushland
management



Public
swimming
pools



Community
halls, art facilities
and programs



Community
services like
aged care



Community
festivals and
events



Economic
development
and tourism



Youth services
like childcare,
immunisation

Legislative Framework for Local Government

[View
Tasmanian
Legislation](#)

The *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) is the principal piece of legislation that establishes the powers and functions of Tasmanian councils.

There are also two key sets of regulations relating to the Act:

- *Local Government (General) Regulations 2025*
- *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2025.*

As well as the Act, there are many other pieces of Tasmanian legislation that affect the operation and activities of councils, with the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* being perhaps the most important.

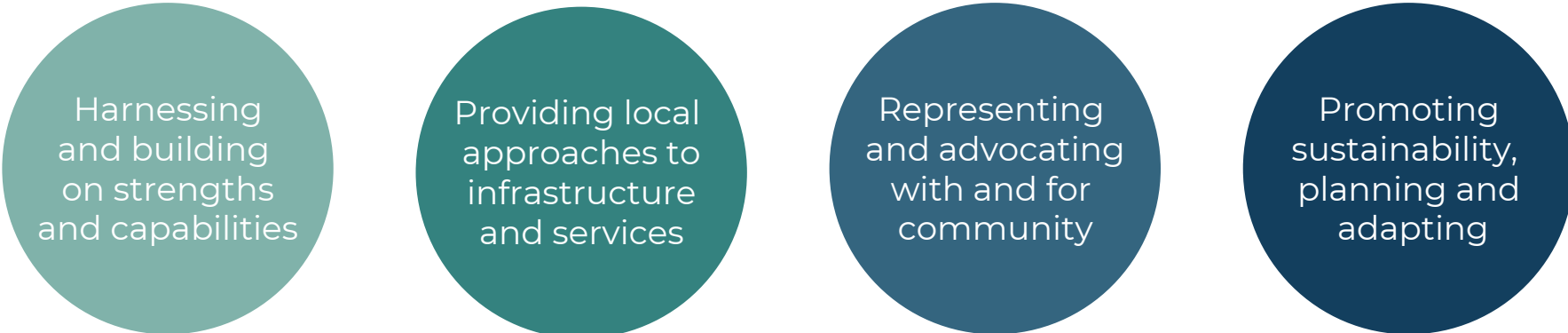
Tasmanian legislation can be accessed online at www.legislation.tas.gov.au

Council functions and powers

Councils are elected to provide leadership and good governance of the municipal area.

They must consider the **diverse needs** of the local community in their decision-making, setting and monitoring strategic objectives and in ensuring resources are managed in a responsible manner.

The role of a council is to support and improve the wellbeing of the community by:



Harnessing
and building
on strengths
and capabilities

Providing local
approaches to
infrastructure
and services

Representing
and advocating
with and for
community

Promoting
sustainability,
planning and
adapting

Council roles

The function of individual councillors are:

- represent and act in the best interest of the community
- facilitate communication by the council with the community
- participate in the activities of council and undertake duties and responsibilities as authorised by council.

Individual councillors have no decision-making power and must not direct council employees.

The functions of councillors acting collectively as the council are to:

- develop and monitor plans, budgets, policies and programs
- facilitate the planning and development of the municipal area
- appoint and monitor the performance of the general manager
- monitor the way services are provided by the council.



Council roles

The mayor:

- acts as the spokesperson, represents council at other forums
- chairs council meetings
- promotes good governance within the council
- leads and participates in the appointment and the monitoring of the performance of the general manager

Mayors, deputy mayor and councillors have equal voting rights at council meetings.



Council roles

The general manager:

- implements the decisions, policies and plans of the council
- runs the day-to-day operations of the council
- provides advice and reports to the council on the performance of its functions
- liaises with the mayor on the activities of council

Council employees including as the executive leaders and council officers:

- are hired and led by the general manager
- carry out the day-to-day activities of the organisation
- have a wide variety of training and expertise to provide advice to council
- ensure the delivery of council services and functions



Land-use planning

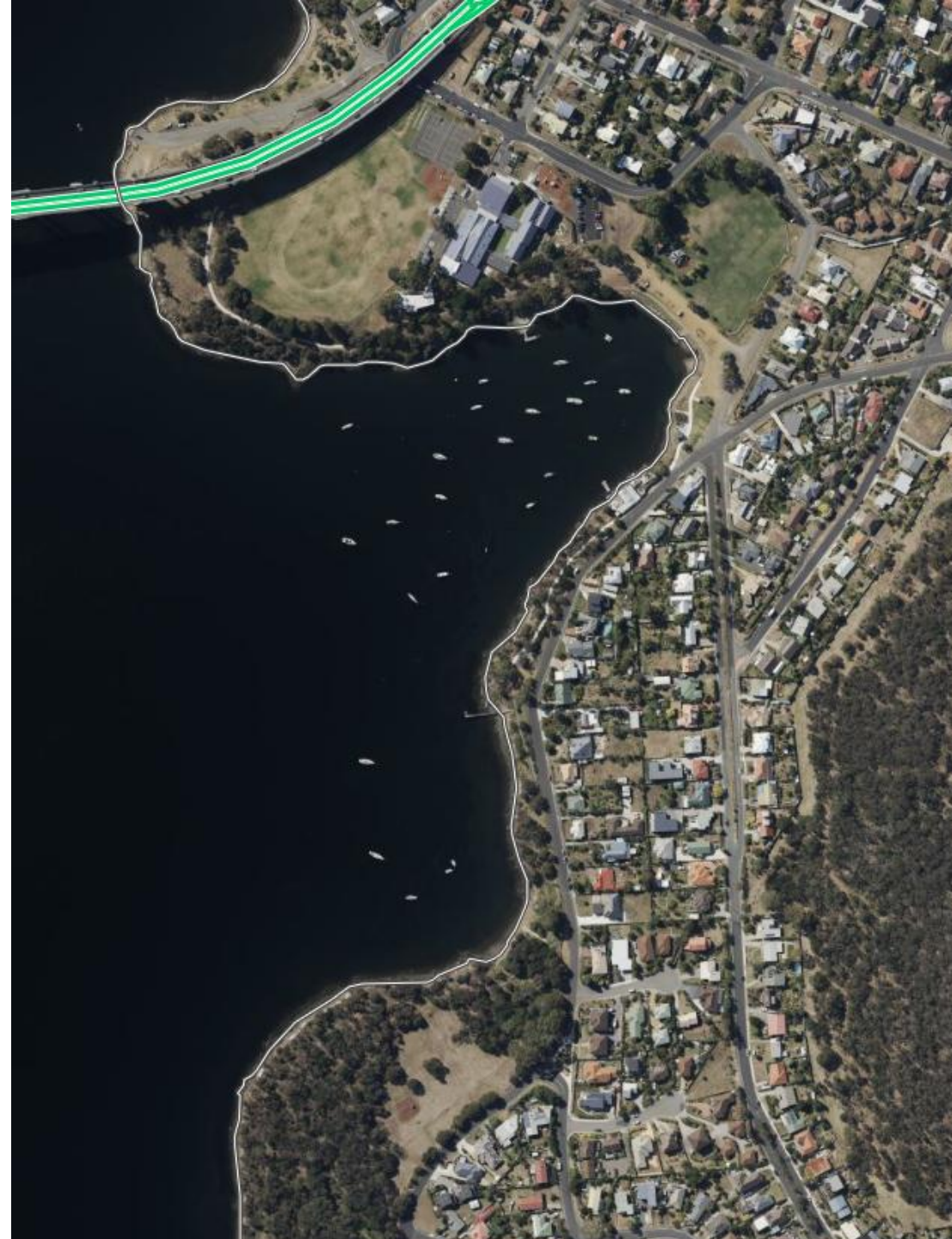
Under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (LUPAA)* a council is defined as a 'planning authority', with responsibility to:

- prepare the planning scheme
- assess applications for planning permits
- enforce planning scheme provisions and permit conditions.

This is often a challenging part of the role of councillor.

Councillors are often faced with having to decide contentious development proposals with sometimes opposing viewpoints from ratepayers, developers, and other parties.

Councillors must make planning decisions based on the requirements of the [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#).



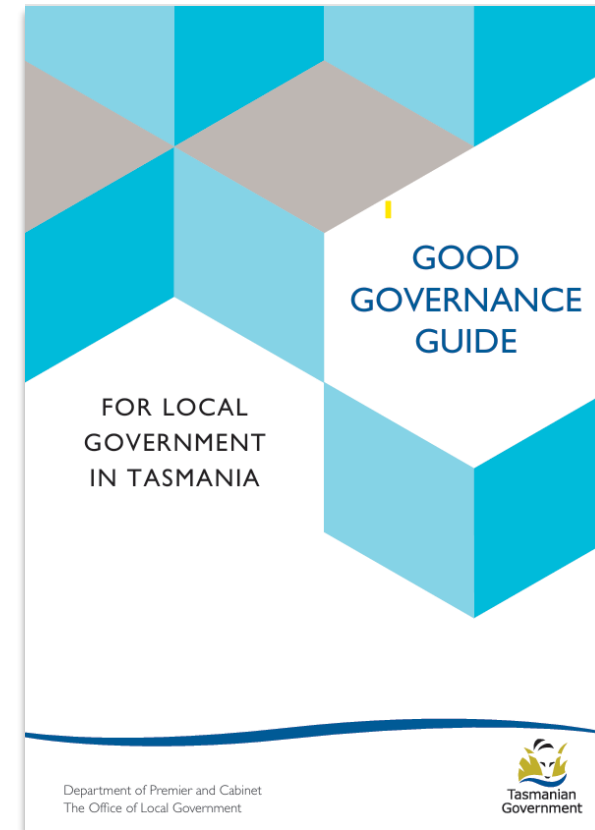
What is good governance?

Governance refers to the processes and culture that guide the activities of an organisation beyond its basic legal obligations.

Good governance in local government is not just about making good decision, but also how you make those decisions.

Good governance involves being:

- transparent
- accountable
- ethical
- respectful
- exercising good judgement.



More information about good governance can be found in the [Good Governance Guide](#) and on the Office of Local Government [website](#).

Important rules

There are many laws that councillors need to be aware of, with the following critical:

Pecuniary interest

It is an offence to participate in any meeting on any matter where you or a close associate has a financial (pecuniary) interest.

Disclosure of information

You must not disclose information from a closed meeting that is not authorised to be disclosed; or given to you on the condition that it be kept confidential.

Improper use of information

You must not use information acquired as a councillor to gain an advantage for you or close associate, or to cause any damage to another person or council.

Misuse of office

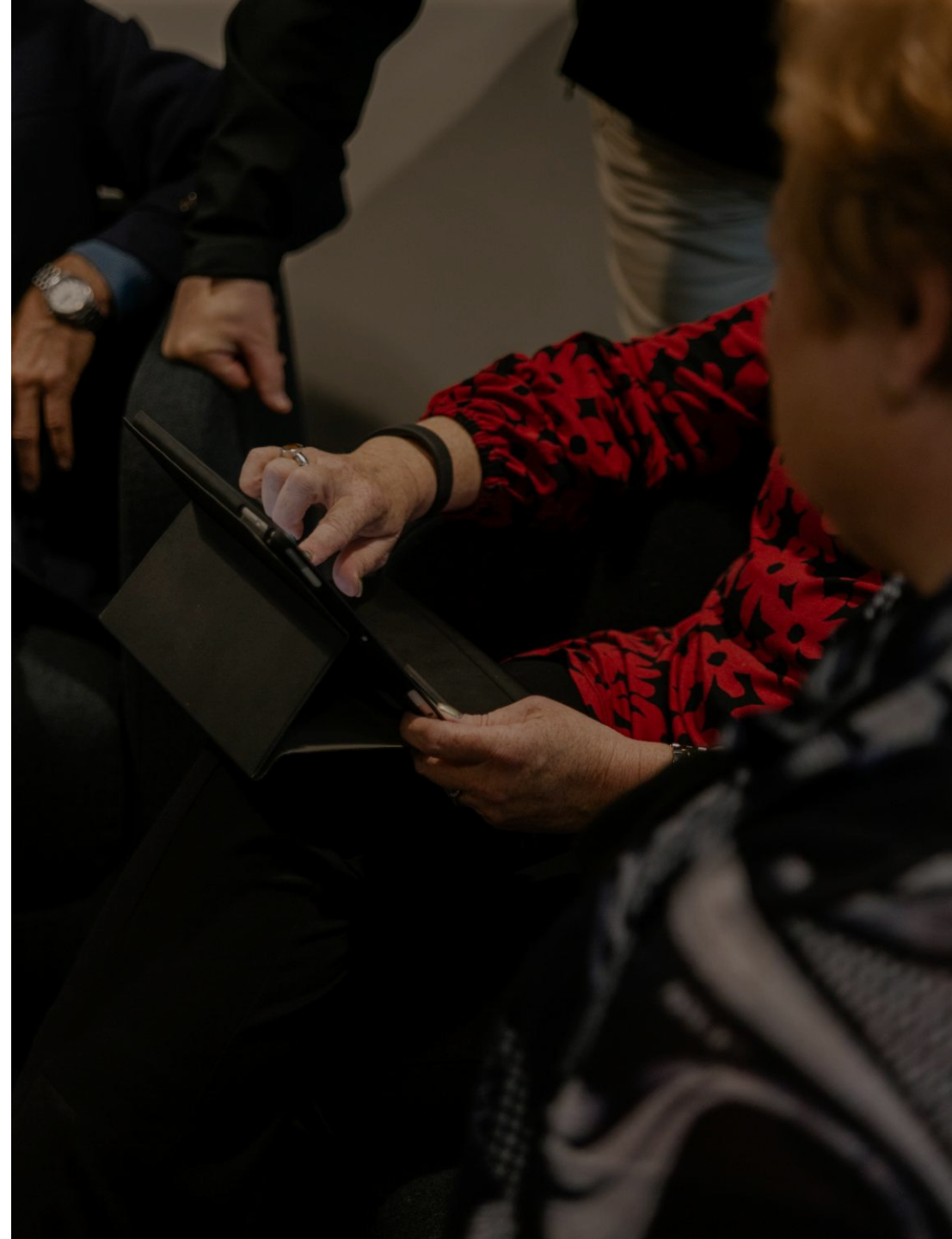
You must attempt to get the council to do something or not do something to gain an advantage or avoid a disadvantage for yourself or a close associate.

Code of Conduct

The *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) establishes a councillor Code of Conduct framework.

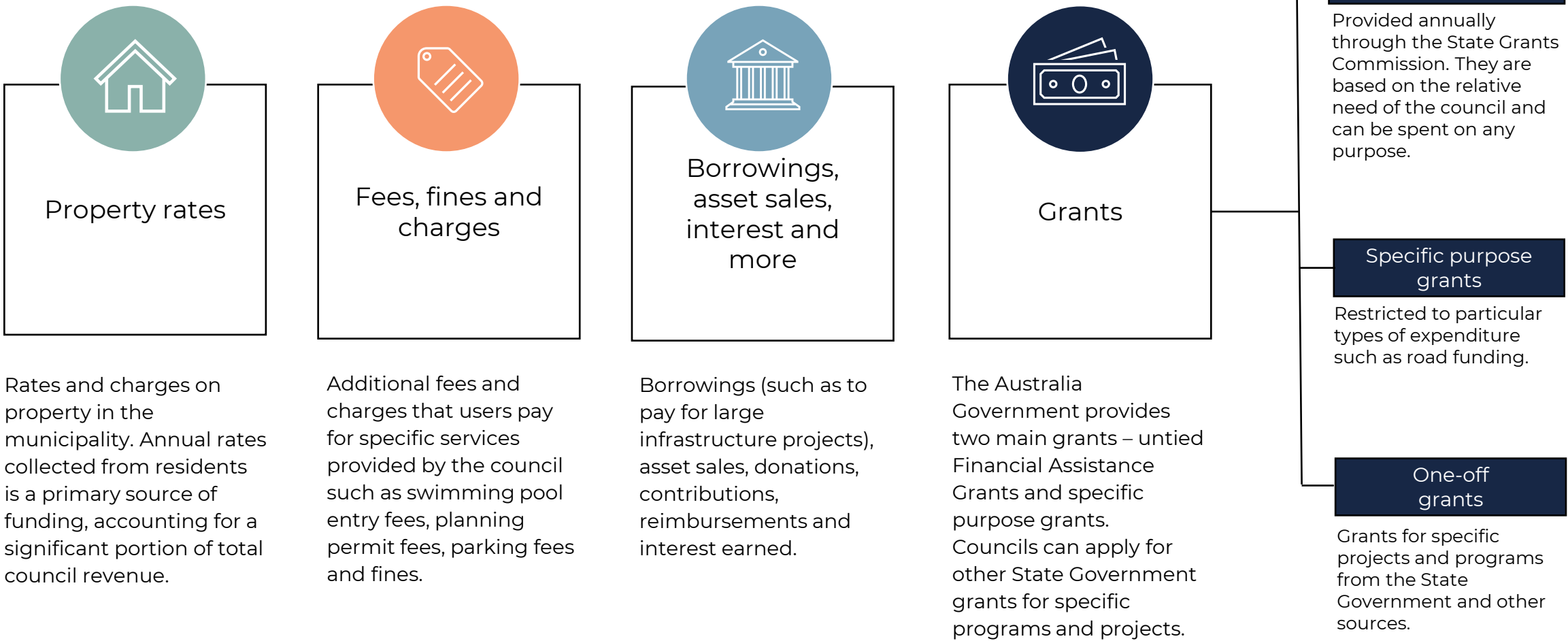
The behaviours a councillor must comply with are in the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2024*, which are:

- Decision-making
- Conflict of interests that are not pecuniary
- Use of office, information, and resources
- Gifts and benefits
- Relationships with community, councillors, and employees
- Representation.



Funding sources for councils

Local government in Tasmania raises its revenue from a range of sources such as:



What's new for the 2026 election?

[Click to view source](#)

Many of the recommendations from the Future of Local Government Review have now been implemented through the Tasmanian Governments' priority reform program. This means the local government election, scheduled for October 2026 will now be subjected to the following changes:



Reduced
councillor
numbers

Councils will now have 7 or 9 councillors elected to each of the 29 councils, depending on their council size. Smaller councils can, in writing to the Minister, request a further reduction to 5 councillors.



Increased
councillor
allowances

Reduction in councillor numbers will result in increased allowances for councillors. Allowances differ by council and are determined by the council's population size, property numbers, assets value, among others.



Mandatory
'core' learning

Councillors are expected to complete mandatory core learning and development activities within the first 12 months of their term. This core learning will be set by the Director of Local Government.



Professional
Development
Policy

The General Manager/CEO of a council is expected to develop a continuing professional development policy, documenting the professional development needs of councillors and estimated expenditure to support activities.



Integrity and
accountability

This includes:

- New pathways to address serious councillor misconduct
- Broadens scope of Performance Improvement Directions
- Power for Minister to appoint Temporary Advisors for council governance issues

Nomination in a local government election

An overview of the nomination and election
process for prospective candidates



Local
Government
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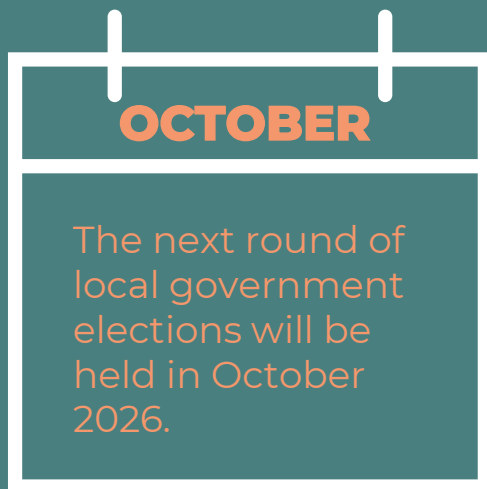
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Tasmanian
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Local government elections

Tasmanian councils are the **closest level of government to the community**. They are responsible for representing the interests of their communities and delivering local services and infrastructure.



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Council elections are held every four years, when all councillors from each council in Tasmania vacate their positions and nominations are called for these vacancies.



The local government **elections give you the opportunity** to nominate to become a councillor or elect councillors who you think best represent you.



In Tasmania, **voting is compulsory** in a local government election.



During elections voters elect representatives to councils across the state; between **7 and 9 councillors** (one is the Mayor) make up the council, who usually serve for **four years** (a term).

Councillor eligibility

Under Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, a person is eligible to nominate as a candidate for councillor if they meet ALL of the following criteria:

An elector in the
municipal area

Have their
principal place of
residence in
Tasmania

Are not a
councillor in
another council

Have not been
barred by a
court from
nominating

Are not an
employee of
the council in
that municipal
area

Have not been
removed from
the office of
councillor
because of
inadequacy or
incompetency

Are not bankrupt

Are not subject to
a care order

Are not
undergoing a
term of
imprisonment

Have not been
sentences for a
crime where the
sentence has not
yet been
executed

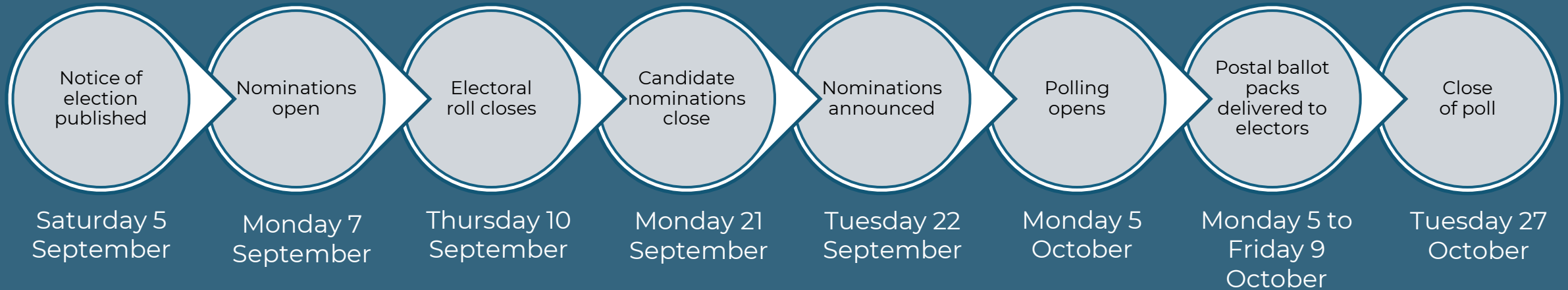
Are nominating
for councillor in
one council area
only

Do you tick all the boxes?

Notice of election

The Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) conducts local government elections.

The Electoral Commissioner will advertise the notice of election in the relevant daily newspaper on the 8th Saturday before closing day.



Nomination

A nomination form must be:



Signed by
electors

You must have your nomination form signed by at least 2 electors of the municipal areas (people voting in that electorate).



Signed by
candidate

You (the candidate) must sign your nomination form.



Lodged with
sufficient time

You must lodge your nomination with sufficient time to ensure it is received before the close of nominations.



Removed with
sufficient notice

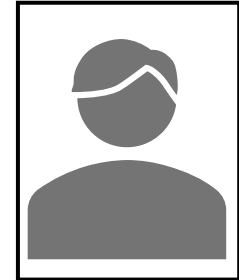
You can withdraw your nomination if you provide a signed written notice to the TEC before the close of nominations.

Candidate statements

- Candidate statements and photos accompany the ballot papers sent to each elector and are published on the TEC website
- There is **one statement per candidate**, even if the candidate is contesting for mayor/deputy mayor.
- You may not mention another candidate by name without their written consent.
- Candidate statements and a photo are not compulsory.
- Photos should be passport style, but you can smile!
- Candidates can submit a web link with the candidate statement, as an opportunity to present more information to interested voters.

Jane Citizen

Contesting position:
Councillor, City of
Hobart Council.



Candidate Statements:

- 600-character, two paragraph limit
- You cannot reference other candidates or gifts, donations and prizes.
- You are responsible for the accuracy of your statement
- Statements may be amended or rejected by the Electoral Commissioner.

Electoral advertising

Electoral advertising is defined in the Act as any advertising, by any of the following means:



Notice, sign,
pamphlet,
or poster

How-to-vote
card

Print
medium

Broadcast by
radio or
television

Internet
content

A person cannot purchase, publish or distribute any electoral advertising which contains the name, photograph or likeness of a candidate without their written consent.

Printed electoral advertising must be authorised with the true name and address of the person responsible, from 5 September to 27 October. If unsure, it is prudent to authorise it.

For example- "Authorised by: Jane Citizen, 1 Long Road, Hobart."

Advertising limits

The advertising expenditure limits for this year's election are:

- **\$21,000** for all candidates contesting the Clarence City, Glenorchy City, Hobart City, Launceston City & Kingborough elections
- **\$13,000** for all candidates contesting an election for any other Tasmanian local government council.
- These limits apply for the period 6 August to 27 October
- If you jointly advertise with another candidate, you must declare the total expense in your return.
- It is against the law to use some locations, such as on roadsides or attached to electricity poles.

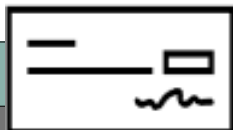
Advertising Return

Advertising returns must be lodged with the Electoral Commissioner within 45 days of issue of certificate of election and must report on all advertising during the relevant period.



Voting

Candidates will need to understand who and how to vote. See below the commonly asked questions:

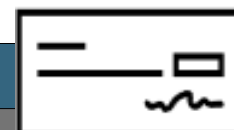


Who can vote at the local government elections?

Anyone who is enrolled on the State roll for an address in a municipal area is automatically enrolled for that municipal area.

Other people who own or occupy land in the municipal area or are the nominated representatives of a corporate body which owns or occupies land are eligible to enrol but must lodge an application with the general manager.

Voting in Tasmanian local government elections is **compulsory** for electors on the State roll.



How do we vote?

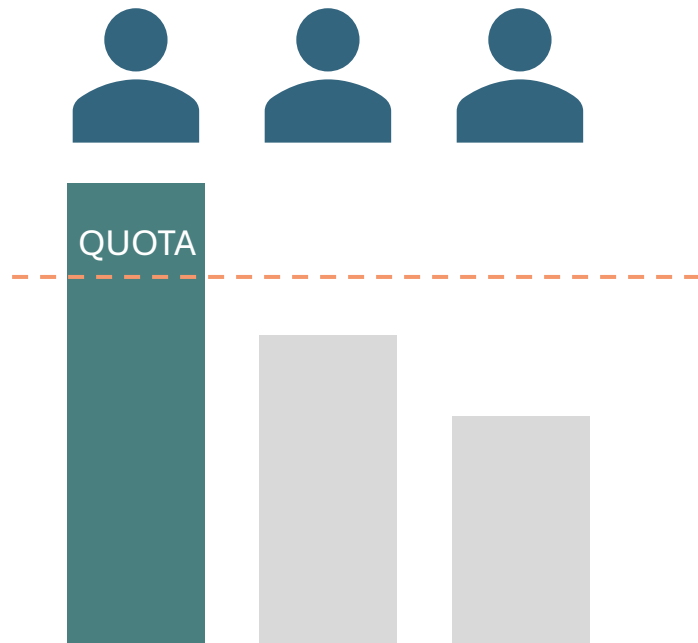
Voting in local government elections is conducted through a postal ballot. This means there is a 'polling period' of approximately 3 weeks to allow voters to return their ballots to the returning officer for their council. Ballots are opened and counted in front of scrutineers (candidate representatives).

What system is used to count votes?

Local government elections use the Hare-Clark method of proportional representation. Candidates are elected once their total number of votes equals or exceeds the quota.

The [TEC produced a video](#) to explain the distribution of voting used in the Hare-Clark method, also used in the Tasmanian House of Assembly election.

Understanding Hare-Clarke Voting



Robinson rotation, quota and preferential voting

Vote redistribution

First surplus votes of those that reach a quota are redistributed, followed by eliminated candidates.

Transfer value = surplus / votes received

Quota 200, Jim receives 400 votes

Jim's surplus votes transfer value is 0.5 (200/400)

If Mary received 100 second preferences from Jim, then she gains an extra 50 votes (100 x 0.5).

Tasmanian Electoral Commission

The Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) conducts local government elections on behalf of Tasmanian councils.

The TEC publishes a detailed [Information for Candidates](#) booklet which outlines the full election process, from the notice of election through to the counting of votes.

The rules for Tasmanian local government elections are established by the:

1. *Local Government Act 1993*
2. *Local Government (General) Regulations 2025*

Prior to nomination, it is important prospective candidates understand:

- the eligibility criteria,
- how to nominate, and
- the responsibilities of candidates.



Further resources

Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT)

LGAT is established under the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) as a peak body responsible for councils in Tasmania.

Our purpose is to:

- Protect and represent the interests and rights of councils in Tasmania.
- Promote an efficient and effective system of local government in Tasmania.
- Provide services to member councils, councillors and employees of councils.

Visit the LGAT website:
www.lgat.tas.gov.au

Office of Local Government (OLG)

This is a state government branch that is responsible for administering local government legislation.

The OLG:

- Provides guidance and assistance to councils, councillors, council staff and the general public;
- Develops local government policy, with an ongoing focus on sustainability and performance;
- Investigates alleged breaches of law.

Visit the OLG website:
www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government

Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC)

The TEC and the Electoral Commissioner have statutory responsibilities for the independent and impartial conduct of elections and referendums.

The TEC:

- Conducts all state and local government elections including recounts and referendums;
- Implements electoral boundary redistributions;
- Conducts public electoral information programs.

Visit the TEC website:
www.tec.tas.gov.au



Want a seat at the table?

LGAT's Candidate Handbook and other resources
are available at lgat.tas.gov.au/council-elections

