



#PlanningMatters

27 January 2023

Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 123 Hobart TAS 7001
Feedback by survey link [here](#) and via
lg.consultation@dpac.tas.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: Local Government Elections Feedback

The Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT) thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the 2022 Local Government elections. Feedback has been sought via a survey that closes on the 30 January 2023, at midnight.

Our feedback includes three sections, which are outlined below: 'What is PMAT'; PMAT's work during the 2018 and 2022 Local Government Elections'; and 'Local Government Election Feedback – Key Recommendations'.

PMAT's main feedback is that all Local Government candidate contact details must be publicly and easily available in a timely fashion. This recommendation has been informed by our previous work. During the last two Tasmanian Local Government elections PMAT endeavoured to survey all candidates, [via email](#), to ask their position on key planning issues. Obtaining candidate email addresses was difficult, time consuming and took many volunteer hours and in many instances was impossible within the election timeframes.

Democracy cannot function without communication. In order for voters to make informed choices among candidates, voters must learn about candidates' policy positions on issues such as planning.

This is especially important now that voting is compulsory for Local Government elections. Voting is compulsory, thus it follows that it must also be compulsory for candidates to provide their contact details - phone and email details at minimum.

PMAT will also write to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and the Australian Electoral Commission to ensure contacting candidates during elections is as easy as possible.

Please contact us if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie

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State Coordinator - PMAT



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WHAT IS PMAT

The [Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania](#) (PMAT) is a growing network of [almost 70 community groups](#) from across *lutruwita* /Tasmania which is committed to a vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in planning excellence. Our Alliance is united in common concern over the new Tasmanian state planning laws and what they mean for Tasmania's future. The level of collaboration and solidarity emerging within the advocacy campaign of PMAT, as well as the number of groups involved is unprecedented in Tasmania and crosses community group genres: recreation, environment, urban/local community associations, European built heritage, ratepayers and 'Friends of ' groups.

Land use planning impacts every inch of Tasmania. We hold that good planning is fundamental to our way of life and democracy. PMAT works to raise community awareness about planning and encourages community engagement in the planning process.

PMAT is an independent, apolitical, not-for-profit [incorporated association](#), governed by a [skills-based Board](#). PMAT is funded entirely [by donations](#).

In 2020 PMAT was named Australia's Planning Champion, a prestigious honour awarded by the Planning Institute of Australia that recognises non-planners for their advocacy and for making a significant contribution and lasting presence to the urban and regional environment. PMAT was awarded the Tasmanian Planning Champion title in 2019.

PMAT's purpose is to achieve a values-based, fair and equitable planning scheme implemented across Tasmania, informed by [PMAT's Platform Principles](#) and delivering the objectives of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*.

As outlined in [PMAT's Strategic Plan 2021–2023](#), 'PMAT's vision is for Tasmania to be a global leader in planning excellence. We believe best practice planning must embrace and respect all Tasmanians, enhance community well-being, health and prosperity, nourish and care for Tasmania's outstanding natural values, recognise and enrich our cultural heritage and, through democratic and transparent processes, deliver sustainable, integrated development in harmony with the surrounding environment.'

Planning schemes must offer a balance between development, individual rights and community amenity, and not just make it easier for development and growth at the cost of community well-being and natural and cultural values. PMAT aims to ensure that Tasmanians have a say in a planning system that prioritises the health and well-being of the whole community, the liveability of our cities, towns and rural areas, and the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage. PMAT considers that the incoming Tasmanian Planning Scheme will weaken the protections for places where we live and places we love around Tasmania.



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PMAT'S WORK DURING THE 2018 AND 2022 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

During the last two Tasmanian Local Government elections PMAT endeavoured to survey all candidates to ask their position on key planning issues (see our work [here](#)).

2022

In 2022, PMAT surveyed 398 of the 505 Local Government candidates (that is, we could only obtain email addresses for 78% of candidates – and this was not an easy process). Of the 398 candidates, 169 completed our survey.

Our survey asked one critical question: 'If elected will you support retaining Councils as a Planning Authority?' That is, if elected would you want to retain the power to vote on the developments that have the greatest impact on your local community? Would you want to give up this right to represent your local community?

The overwhelming majority of local council candidates, who took part in our survey (99.4%), believe councils should retain their role as a Planning Authority. That is, Councils should retain the power to vote on the developments that have the greatest impact on their local community. They do not want to give up this right to represent their local communities.

2018

In 2018, PMAT surveyed 407 of the 418 Local Government candidates (**we obtained email addresses for 97% of candidates – but it took many volunteer hours**). Of the 407 candidates, 144 completed the survey.

The overwhelming majority of local council candidates who took part in a planning survey believe councils should have greater capacity to protect local character and amenity and places important to local communities.

They believe major tourist developments in national parks should be released for public comment, and that councils should have the final approval.

There was also overwhelming support for planning rules to protect people's right to privacy in their own home.

The survey asked three questions: ONE: Do you believe that Councils should have greater capacity to protect local character and amenity and places important to local communities? TWO: Do you believe that planning rules should protect a neighbour's right to sunshine and privacy in their own home and garden? THREE: Do you believe that major tourist developments proposed for national parks (and other reserves) should be discretionary i.e. the development proposal is released for public comment and the council can either approve or refuse it?



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION FEEDBACK – KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

PMAT RECOMMENDATION 1 - All election candidates must provide their contact details, including their email address, to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

During the last two Tasmanian Local Government elections PMAT endeavoured to survey all candidates to ask their position on key planning issues (see our work [here](#)).

However, it was difficult, time consuming and essentially impossible to contact all candidates within the election time frame.

Democracy cannot function without communication. In order for voters to make informed choices among candidates, voters must learn about candidates' policy positions on issues such as planning. With the introduction of compulsory voting for local government elections there is now a greater obligation on voters to participate in the democratic process. In putting themselves forward for election it is only fair and reasonable that candidates also make a commitment to an open process by providing the contact details that will better allow voters to assess their positions on election issues.

During the 2022 Local Government Elections, and only after several phone calls and emails to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, we were able to obtain an Excel spreadsheet with candidate contact details. But this list only included contact details of those candidates who had chosen to provide these to the Commission.

We recommend that all Local Government election candidates be required to provide their contact details, including their email address, to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

It should also be noted that many candidates who were already sitting as elected Councillors considered that they did not need to provide their contact details as they could be contacted via their respective Council's website. However, this means the general public (e.g. such as PMAT) have to manually copy and paste email addresses from each of Tasmania's 29 Council websites.

PMAT RECOMMENDATION 2- All Local Government election candidates' contact details, including their email address, must be made publicly available, in a timely and easily accessible format e.g. by both Excel spreadsheet and PDF.

PMAT contacted as many candidates as possible via Survey Monkey. This required importing email addresses via Excel. It is time consuming to copy and paste email addresses from a PDF into Excel.

PMAT RECOMMENDATION 3 - The Tasmanian Electoral Commission reverse the decision made in 2022 to not provide postal addresses of eligible voters enrolled on each Council's General Manager's Roll.



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Given voting is now compulsory, local government candidates should have the ability to reach ALL eligible voters in their electorates, not just those enrolled with the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

Individuals who take the time and effort to enrol on the General Manager's Roll of an electorate in which they may own secondary property, conduct business or rent, should be able to receive information from candidates standing in that electorate.

In 2022, unlike previous elections, the Commission chose to provide only the physical addresses of those secondary properties (eg remote shacks) and not the postal address of the owner's primary residence.

This decision by the Commission was taken without consultation, was not communicated to candidates, nor an explanation provided. Many Council areas have significant numbers of eligible voters on their General Manager's Roll - this decision had a serious negative impact on the election costs of the many candidates who had election materials already printed for distribution to those voters enrolled on their General Manager's Roll.