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To whom it may concern:

RE: Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper (My Submission)

**Definition of “democracy”:**

- **a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives**
- **the practice or principles of social equality**

Democracy is not “first among equals”, as one self-serving Councillor quipped, but only after he told his Deputy Mayor, who intends to run for Mayor, “I won’t run against you. I would prefer to serve you as your Deputy Mayor”. In other words, fully two years prior to election he and his ilk have already decided who will set the agenda from 2026, for the next four years. Firstly, we candidates and Councillors come from diverse backgrounds. Some hold a PhD, some are functionally illiterate. Some are tech geeks, whilst others would be lucky to know how to write an email or open a PDF. Some are well travelled, whilst others are proud to have never left Tasmania. We cannot be equals, with the only exception that we ran for election or got elected to Council. The electorate decides who should lead the municipality into the future.

What if their agenda is contrary to the electorate’s? What if their sly agenda is contrary to the minority of Councillors? Do you think any of that will create dysfunction?

I am aware of a contingent of pro-windfarm Councillors and candidates. But, I believe nuclear energy is the way to go, as it provides more energy consistently, has a longer lifespan and has a less damaging footprint on the landscape. It is less destructive to native flora and fauna. I am not alone in my thinking. Contriving a way to elect Councillors with a specific political party leaning or a specific agenda to push through Council during their term is not democracy, in truth nor practice. It merely gives a Liberal government an opportunity to push their renewable energy agenda and foist it on the public, to the detriment of Tasmania’s landscape and scenic beauty. It will merely

diminish the small 11% piece of the tourism pie visiting the Central Highlands. People do not come from around the world to see wind turbines. Before the first windfarm was hauled up the road and erected there should have been “scenic landscape values” and “scenic road corridors” established to protect our precarious tourism industry. So, I absolutely oppose the proposal that Councils elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Let the people decide.

A real issue of concern that the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper has not addressed is partisanship. Or, Councillors wedded to Liberal, Labor or Greens Party, then nominating for Council elections, getting elected and pushing their party politics down the throats of fellow Councillors and the electorate. The problem that exists at one metropolitan Council that has a majority of Greens Councillors, is that it has obstructed development, unless it fits their ideology, but is contrary to what businesses and the majority of non-Green electors want. If Councillors are suppose to vote on matters with an open mind and not have a conflict of interest, then if a majority are bicycle lane advocates and foist it on the rest of the Councillors in their Council and other Councillors from rural councils commuting to and from the city, but are continually stuck in traffic jams, then something needs to change. It should be mandated . . . It should be law that candidates and Councillors should be non-partisan and or apolitical, otherwise they would have an automatic conflict of interest.

In the Introduction, of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper, on [page 3](#), you state,

- [strengthen donations disclosure and electoral advertising requirements, I have never sought donations for a campaign](#). I have been elected three times without campaigning or advertising. If the major political parties are reluctant to disclose who is donating to them and how much, isn't it a bit unfair to strengthen donation disclosure, if members of parliament are reluctant to do it? Throughout this discussion paper, the author(s) impose more and expect more from candidates for Council and Councillors, than they do of either federal or state members of parliament. It is unfair and discriminatory.
- [“make changes to the franchise for electors” . . . What does that even mean, in plain English?](#) Serving on Council is not like working at McDonalds or Kentucky Fried Chicken, except for the meager Councillor Allowance.

On [page 4](#) of 40 of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper, the title is “How we got here”. Then, the author(s) refers to “Those reforms were the outcome of a consultation process involving over 800 survey responses and 75 submissions.” Are you aware the population, as of June 2023 of Tasmania is 573,479 residents and the eligible electors is 415,007. So, the author(s) of this discussion paper have decided to make these reforms based upon 0.1927679 percent of eligible electors. What do the 99.8072 percent of eligible electors think? And, is it fair for the minority pro-build-it-at-any-cost stadium huggers to plunge the majority of Tasmanians into the abyss of debt for generations? IS IT FAIR for 800 out of 573,479 Tasmanians to change the way we elect Councillors to Local Government? Please refer to the definition of democracy. 0.1927679 percent of eligible electors deciding for the 99.8072 percent IS NOT democracy, in truth nor in practice.

On page 4 of 40 of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper, the author(s) refer to a \$3 million [Future of Local Government Review](#) that was largely an expensive failure.

The Government introduced compulsory voting for local government elections in advance of the 2022 elections, through the [Local Government Amendment \(Elections\) Act 2022 \(the Amendment Act\)](#). That was the only smart move that has come out of state government.

The [Amendment Act](#) also delivered successful reforms to reduce informal voting rates. Why do voters make an informal vote? #1 They do not appreciate democracy. The list of candidates are uninspiring. Too mentally lazy to get to know candidates, as they get their news and they make their decisions based on social media. Just Google “Robert Cassidy Tasmania” and see what comes up. Last would be “due to larger candidate fields”.

The [limitations \(to voting\) of the current system under the Local Government Act 1993 \(the Act\)](#) are not a failure of the compulsory voting Amendment, but city-dwellers making rules for others who are unfamiliar with the challenges of distance, illiteracy, lack of mobile phone service, insufficient NBN bandwidth, et cetera in RURAL TASMANIA. Mail does not travel as fast, sometimes not at all. Mail gets lost or delayed. Central Highlands municipality encompasses 8,010 sq km, or 12 percent of Tasmania’s land mass. It takes at least 42 minutes to drive, in daylight on a dry Highland Lakes Road from Bothwell to Miena, for example. There would be many telecommunications dead zones along the 59 kilometre journey, where there is no telephone coverage, property owners could be living kilometres off the main thoroughfare and they may not have any internet service. This would make those eligible elector hard for council candidates to “door knock”, if the author(s) of this discussion paper are unaware.

On page 5 of 40, the author(s) referring to donation disclosure make this statement . . . [primarily contested by independent candidates with no campaign assistance](#). Do you recall a Hobart City Councillor named Simon Behrakis? It was a well known fact he was a member of the Tasmanian Young Liberals. Where is he, today? A Liberal Member of Parliament. Or, how about Helen Burnet, who was a Greens advocate and had a Greens agenda whilst serving as a Hobart City Councillor. Where is she, today? Serving in state parliament as a Greens Party member. The author(s) of this discussion paper just do not know what they are talking about.

[Reform proposals and project scope](#) on page 5 states, [The Government’s objective is to deliver new local government electoral legislation . . .](#) The current legislation served Tasmanians well during the 2022 Local Government elections. “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

On page 6,

The paper presents two scenarios for the future format of elections:

- The second relies upon continued distribution by mail of ballot papers, with electors encouraged and enabled to complete and return ballots by hand to physical issuing places, creating a 'hybrid' electoral system. This responds to challenges, namely decreasing postal services standards and increasing costs, which will continue to challenge the conduct of elections by universal postal ballot.

I feel this second scenario would serve rurally dispersed Tasmanians better. The challenge is to assure that Australia Post delivers the ballots in sufficient time. Those living deep in the woods, might only come to Bothwell or similar rural towns with a Licenced Post Office and Post Office Boxes once a week. Be sure to allow sufficient lead time before the ballots are officially counted. A voter might go to town one day during the week to collect mail, then return the following week to post the ballot, for example. I do not believe the TEC allows sufficient time for Tasmanians living rurally. Therefore, as on [page 10 Postal voting](#) has provided electors the ability to work through the ballot paper with the candidate information provided privately and in their own time. Care will need to be taken in the preparation of candidate information and elector material distributed to households to address this gap and traditional postal voting was complemented by increased use of an option for electors to return their completed ballot to council offices as 'issuing places', which I am in favour of.

But, I am not in favour of [electors wishing to vote by post needing to complete a postal ballot declaration](#), identifying one among a prescribed set of reasons for voting via post.

New directions: who should vote in local government elections and how should we elect the deputy mayor?

- [Australian citizens](#) should be the only people eligible to vote, otherwise even Local Government could be corrupted by foreign interference and sly foreign agents pushing their hidden agenda, which has proven to be a stepping stone to state and federal parliament. Australia and Tasmanians face an existential threat to our sovereignty and democracy by communist China, regardless they are our largest trading partner. I submit that if a Permanent Resident who can own a house and property, a building with a business pay council rates and various fees, and wants to participate in our democracy and be eligible to vote in Local Government elections, then they should become Australian citizens, as I have done so, on 11 February 2005, proudly. Communist China does not allow dual nationality, for example and their allegiance is owed to China and the government, first and foremost.

On [page 12](#) the title asks, [What would these scenarios cost?](#) Democracy is not free.

On page 15 the author(s) state, Tasmania is the only Australian jurisdiction where the deputy mayor is popularly . . .

As all Tasmanian mayors are appointed by popular election, one alternative would be the second ranked mayoral candidate be appointed deputy mayor. I believe that is a fair process because that reflects the will of the people. Let the people decide who will serve them as Mayor and the runner up should be selected as Deputy Mayor. That is the true test of democracy.

Even a husband and wife can disagree. They may even disagree what to watch on evening television or which diet they prefer vegan or a Big Mac and Fries or who they will vote for or which party they support, yet remain married.

I absolutely disagree with “elections around the table”, that is nepotism and favouritism or at worst, collusion. As an option to foisting a new provision of the Local Government Act upon us, to eliminate the “office of deputy mayor”, then the mayor should delegate that to the most senior Councillor, during the mayor’s period of absence. This would likely result in less conflict or contest and would save money. This would also eliminate a complete dud from running for election as Deputy Mayor, only to achieve an increased Councillor Allowance. Someone has offered to support me for the position of Mayor and he would run as my Deputy, though I would prefer someone with more to offer and better educated. On the last point . . . IF the author(s) of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper want to make real change . . . Computer literacy should be mandatory to nominate for serving as a Councillor. Further, they should be functionally literate and have numeracy skills to the level of Essential Mathematics and General mathematics, at least.

Reform 1: reduce prescription in the statutory framework to enable the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to approve the electoral process.

Reform 2: enable the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to approve procedures for voting, including by telephone and electronic means, for interstate and overseas electors and electors with impediments to ordinary participation, or for other classes of person prescribed by regulation.

Reform 3: legislate that the Tasmanian Electoral Commission is required to approve procedures in accordance with **universal franchise** (? PLAIN ENGLISH) principles, namely all electors, including electors with additional barriers to participation, are to be afforded an opportunity to vote in an independent, secret and verifiable manner.

I am OK with the aforementioned Reforms, so long as it coincides with the what I present in my Submission.

On page 21 “2. A better franchise for electors and changes to eligibility to run for office” . . . provides a higher – but appropriate – bar for nomination without the introduction of a candidate nomination fee. Is damned discriminatory!

Reform 5: increase the number of elector signatures required to support a notice of nomination to the lesser of 30 or one per cent of the number of electors in the municipal area. Is damned discriminatory! That would work well for large cities with a dense population or a population that is dense. It would not work for widely dispersed rural Tasmanians. In rural Tasmania, communities are disparate and spread far and wide. Come visit and get to know us, before making rules for Councils laying outside the "Big Smoke". Some residents and rate payers you cannot even get to their front door or may see them once in a blue moon. When I asked a local business owner in Bothwell he remarked, "I wouldn't know 30 people." I pressed with, "But, you are a business owner and would come across people every day." He replied, "I am too busy running my business to socialize." OK, if a candidate hangs out at the local pub and gets shit-faced or tends bar every Friday night, he or she may know 30 regulars, in rural Tasmania. For everyone else, we are too busy with living our lives. As an alternative to a candidate fee, the number of signatures required to submit a notice of nomination would be increased from two electors at present to the lesser of 30 persons, or one per cent of electors on the electoral roll for the municipal area. This change provides an initial test of credible public support for a candidacy. Can you imagine, I decided at the last minute to nominate for election to become a Councillor in 2014 and have been re-elected twice more, though I only had three signatures and did not campaign? Worse, I am an immigrant "blow-in." The problem in rural Tasmania is being accepted and getting to know everyone or overcoming the "true-local" gossip mongers. Those who trade in gossip have not bothered to get to know me. I have called Bothwell "home", since 2009. It is the longest I have lived anywhere in my near 71 years, yet I still do not know everyone in Bothwell. I can count on one hand the number of homes I have been invited into, prior to or since becoming a Councilman. The author(s) of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper should put themselves in the shoes of an immigrant blow-in, living in sparsely populated rural Tasmania, rather than thinking like a city dweller who can walk or bicycle to work.

The Central Highlands Council was created in 1993 through the merging of the former municipalities of Bothwell and Hamilton. How many Councillors have served in the Bothwell Council or the Central Highlands Council before me? Why am I the first Councillor to recognize that Bothwell's drinking water supply lacked Fluoride, to protect the dental health of the community and worked tirelessly to have the Tasmania Health Service and TasWater include it, which will be done in 2026? The future contribution to Bothwellians' dental health will outlive me. And, the author(s) of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper would find a way to discriminate against me or make it even more difficult to be re-elected? Why is it that speed limits throughout Bothwell were not reduced, until I got elected? Why is it that a gentleman and a genius who lived 40 years in Bothwell and who was a pioneer of Radio Astronomy, didn't receive a memorial plaque and dedication, until I became a Councilman? And, you would do your best preventing someone like me from nominating or even getting re-elected? What mean, inconsiderate \*&%\$#s!

Did the author(s) of the Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper consider when writing the below statement that Tasmanian parliamentarians

earn a six figure salary, with superannuation, and significant perks, compared to my \$10,000 per year Councillor Allowance? They can well afford a nomination deposit of \$400. It is noted a range of thresholds apply at Tasmanian elections, from 100 nominators for a non-party candidate for the House of Assembly to 10 for a non-party candidate at a Legislative Council election. While it is acknowledged there is some apparent conflict with the lower threshold applying for Legislative Council elections, it is considered desirable and appropriate that candidates demonstrate a threshold commitment to seeking and then serving in the office of councillor prior to appearing on the ballot paper. The nomination deposit of \$400 for all candidates at Tasmanian Parliament elections provides an alternative incentive for serious candidates at those elections, but a higher nominator threshold is considered more suitable and more inclusive for council elections.

Acknowledging the potential impact of this measure on those who could gain the support of 30 (or one per cent) of electors, but who make a relatively late decision to nominate, consideration will be given to a two-stage nomination process in the Electoral Bill. This would see prospective candidates submit a notice of intention to nominate, followed by a period (of two to four weeks) to collate signatures, prepare a candidate statement, and ensure completion of pre-nomination training, prior to the submission of the notice of nomination (Reform 10). Just thinking like big city dwellers. Rural Tasmania will suffer.

I agree with these Reforms, below, except that only an individual Australian citizen should be entitled to one vote, under his or her name:

Reform 6: move administration of the 'general managers' roll' from councils to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, including administration of the process through which land occupier and corporate nominee (supplementary electoral roll) electors are to enrol.

Reform 7: provide a definition for the purposes of 'occupier' of land that establishes an occupier holds a leasehold interest or licence over land, and/or the person's ordinary place of residence is in the municipal area.

Reform 8: provide that a person seeking enrolment on the supplementary roll must complete a land occupier declaration and provide documentation of the leasehold or licence over land, or evidence of their period of residence in Tasmania to the satisfaction of the Commissioner.

Reform 9: implement the 'one person, one vote' principle and require a nominee of a corporate landowner or occupier of land may nominate one natural person who is an officeholder of the company to be its nominee.

I agree with this: Requiring a nominee of a corporate landowner or occupier is an officeholder provides some additional integrity to the 'one person, one vote' principle

**I wholeheartedly disagree with** the below discriminatory agenda. Has any Minister for Local Government completed prescribed program of pre-nomination training, prior to their submission of a notice of nomination? The

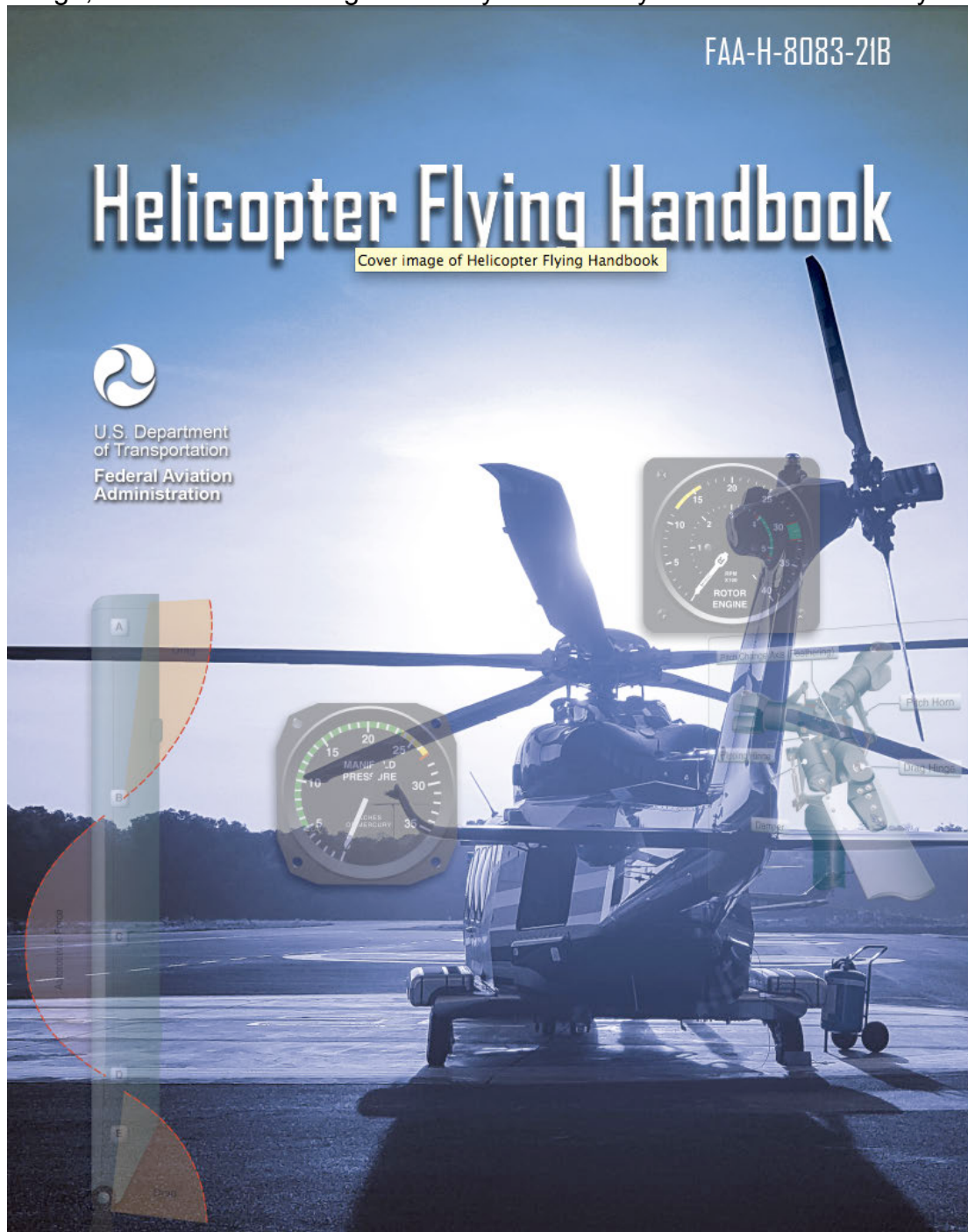
Prime Minister and Tasmania Premier would not even have to read their respective Constitutions or undertake any training. (attached letter)

**Reform 10:** provide that all intending candidates (other than incumbent councillors) must complete a prescribed program of pre-nomination training prior to their submission of a notice of nomination.

The Tasmanian Government endorsed the institution of compulsory pre-nomination training as part of its response to the Future of Local Government Review. (a wasted \$3 million)

It boggles my mind that the author(s) of this Local Government Electoral Bill Discussion Paper to dare suggest The Bill will provide that people intending to become candidates at elections (other than those who are councillors at the time of the notice of elections) must complete training specified by the Director of Local Government, if any, prior to lodging their notice of nomination. The intention of this provision is that all people contesting local government elections will have a common threshold understanding of the particular role and functions of councillors and the day-to-day functioning of councils as the tier of government closest to the community. I have completed many of the online learning modules and discovered errors, which I had provided feedback for and changes were made to the learning modules. Who is teaching who? And, those who have reported they have completed learning modules by simply going straight to the test to receive credit without reading the module, how has that improved their understanding of the particular role and functions of councillors and the day-to-day functioning of councils? And, how many Councillors still make the same gross errors in decision-making or have an undeclared conflict of interest, though they have completed the online learning modules? Trust that the only way to achieve the outcome you seek is doing it. Do you suppose you could learn how to fly a helicopter and hover it 3 feet over a spot on the ground, just by reading the Helicopter Flying handbook? I was a helicopter flying instrument instructor (the highest level) in the US, from 1987 until 2013 and held a Grade 2 helicopter flying instructor in Australia from 2009 to 2011. I can assure you that you would not be able to fly a helicopter and hover it 3 feet over a spot on the ground, just by reading about it. But, I could teach you how to do it, sitting beside me in a helicopter with a dual set of controls, without you ever having read the Helicopter Flying Handbook. Serving as a Councilman is very much the same. Reading some Section of the Land Use Planning Approvals Act in 2014 and never needing to put that knowledge into practice within the next three years, until some Development Application comes up, do you think you will remember it? No! We learn on-the-job by doing something again and again, like Meeting Procedures. AND, it is a failure of Mayors, Deputy Mayors, veteran and senior Councillors who have not imparted their knowledge onto new Councillors. To achieve what you intend, I strongly suggest that at the beginning of every new Council, after elections, the Mayor and General manager hold a Workshop, before the first ordinary Council Meeting to discuss Meeting Procedures, and go through a complex mock Council Agenda. Discuss such nuisances such as Amendments, Foreshadowing, Suspension of Procedures to discuss an issue, Closed Session versus Open Session, when is a Councillor serving as a Planning Authority, what it means to be a member of the Planning Authority, Notice of Motion, et cetera. IF, IF

this was done when I was first elected, in 2014, I would have been “switched On” sooner and a more productive Councillor and certainly would have felt included or participating. But, reading about it is a gross waste of time in busy lives. Worse, we are not being paid for that time sitting in front of a computer reading the online learning modules. The Minister of Local Government, Office of Local Government, and Local Government Association of Tasmania heap more on us for the same \$10,000 per year Allowance. At near 71 years of age, I would have never guessed my retirement years would be so busy.



The Candidate Statement should be expanded. What I need to write to inform voters is insufficient in its present allotment of words and characters. And on page 26-

Reform 11: require that the TEC provides all people submitting a notice of nomination the opportunity to provide a candidate information statement (in an approved format, providing prescribed information) and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission is to publish candidate information through appropriate means.

The Director of Local Government has no business interfering in elections. I have had three vexatious Codes of Conduct taken against me, but none were upheld on even a single point. Does the voting public need to know that or what I have achieved on their behalf, during my three terms as a Councilman? I have received more than one anonymous letter in my letter box, with its author stating they chose to write to me, because I get things done. Which is more relevant? I would consider that discriminatory, as critical of the Office of Local Government as I have been. They are actually part of the problem. You might as well invite President Xi to provide a statement against my name, as much as I have had to say and write against communist China.

Reform 12: provide that the Director of Local Government may provide a statement to be published by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission alongside the candidate information.

Councillors should be non-partisan, otherwise they come to Council with a conflict of interest voting on matters that do not align with their party's agenda.

Reform 13: establish that nomination by a registered party is to be included in the information published by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, and printed on the ballot paper, with the candidate's name to be printed alongside the name of the registered party.

Reform 14: provide for candidates whose nomination form is not lodged by a registered party to request to be identified with a group name.

On page 29 Why doesn't Tasmania's government set the example, insofar as Strengthened donations disclosure and electoral advertising requirements. What are they trying to hide?

I agree with the following:

Reform 15: corresponding to the Electoral Act Review Final Report and the amended section 197 of the Electoral Act 2004, introduce new prohibitions on the dissemination of misleading and deceptive statements.

The author(s) must consider AI rendering and information when writing -also excessive "Photoshopping" is false advertising:

Reform 16: remove the general restriction upon a person, without the consent of the candidate or intending candidate, printing, publishing or distributing any electoral advertising that contains the name, photograph or a likeness of a candidate or intending candidate at an election; other than 'how-to-vote' material intended to instruct an elector in the completion of their vote.

I agree with the following Reforms:

Reform 17: clarify the definition of electoral advertising

Reform 18: provide that only a candidate, intending candidate, or a person so nominated in the notice of nomination by a candidate, may incur electoral expenditure; and provide that expenditure by other persons to promote or procure the election of a candidate or intending candidate is an offence.

Reform 19: institute authorisation requirements for electoral advertising and associated material.

Reform 20: replace advertising expenditure limits with a general expenditure limit, with reference to the expenditure limit for Legislative Council elections under the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023.

Reform 21: require that a candidate is to report expenditure made on their behalf in their electoral expenditure return, in the same manner as personal expenditure. The present requirement to attribute, in full, to each candidate so featured the value of advertising featuring multiple candidates (for instance, multiple party candidates) will be retained.

Reform 22: prohibit any person from incurring any expenditure for or on behalf of a registered party with a view to promoting or procuring the election of a candidate or intending candidate.

If a candidate or councillor has any integrity, they should not accept any donation or gifts to send the message they cannot be bought. I accept none.

Reform 23: maintain the \$50 threshold for the disclosure of gifts and benefits and extend this requirement from incumbent councillors to all candidates, who will be required to lodge two candidate donation returns with the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. The new Bill will also require the publication of initial donations disclosures on the Commission's website during the polling period and until the certificate of election.

and

Reform 25: provide that it is an offence for a councillor, intending candidate or candidate, at any time, to accept a donation for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate or intending candidate at a local government election

I agree with the below Reforms:

Reform 24: provide that it is an offence for a person other than a candidate or intending candidate to accept a gift or benefit for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate, or for the dominant purpose of influencing the way electors vote in an election; and that it is an offence to make a gift or donation to a person other than a candidate or intending candidate for this purpose.

Reform 26: provide that a local government election or by-election may not be held such that the polling period overlaps the date of a Tasmanian or Australian Government parliamentary election.

Reform 27: provide the Tasmanian Electoral Commission with powers of investigation.

Reform 28: alignment of electoral offences and sanctions with the Electoral . .

Reform 29: provide a statutory caretaker framework, applying from the notice of election to the date of the issue of the certificate of election for all elections other than by-elections and countbacks.

Reform 30: provide that during the caretaker period, prohibit a council from making any major policy or financial decisions, namely decisions (Common sense).

Reform 31: provide that during the caretaker period, it is an offence for a council to: blah, blah, blah.

Reform 32: provide that major policy or financial decisions of a council during the caretaker period are of no effect and provide that persons who incur loss or damage due to an ineffectual decision of a council, who acted in good faith, are entitled to recover compensation from the council.

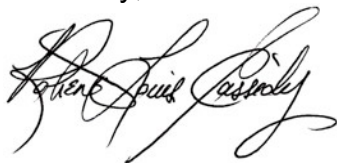
I believe the threshold should be higher, say 25 percent.

Reform 33: increase the proportion of electors signing a petition required to compel a council to hold an elector poll to 20 per cent; while restricting the matters about which an elector poll may be held to matters with a legitimate connection to the exercise of a council's functions or powers or to the incorporation of the council, as determined by the council.

Finally, let the people decide who should serve as their mayor and leader of their municipality.

If you reflect upon the definition of democracy and if you cherish it, why would you diminish it?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Louis Cassidy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being the most prominent.

Robert Louis Cassidy