Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy

Consultation Submission

Executive Summary

Sorell Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft *Tasmania's Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy*. Council strongly supports the Strategy's objective of building a more productive, diversified and investment-ready Tasmanian economy, and considers that the final Strategy can be strengthened by placing greater emphasis on implementation, governance, enabling infrastructure and place-based delivery.

As one of Tasmania's fastest growing municipalities and the regional service centre for the South East, Sorell is experiencing first-hand the opportunities and constraints associated with population growth, housing demand, infrastructure pressure and private investment. Council's submission emphasises that economic diversification will depend not only on strategic intent, but on the practical systems, partnerships and infrastructure required to translate that intent into delivery.

Council supports the six priority areas identified in the draft Strategy, including unlocking private investment, accelerating innovation, lifting productivity, activating regions, growing workforce capability and strengthening infrastructure. Across these priorities, Council identifies several consistent themes: recognising local government as a strategic delivery partner; treating enabling infrastructure as economic infrastructure; improving coordination across State agencies, Government Business Enterprises, councils and industry; and ensuring regional communities are supported through place-based planning and investment readiness.

The final Strategy should include a clear implementation framework that identifies lead agencies, delivery partners, governance arrangements, performance measures, public reporting mechanisms and regular review. This will provide greater certainty to investors, businesses, councils and communities, and will help ensure the Strategy becomes a practical framework for coordinated action rather than a statement of intent.

Council considers that Tasmania has a unique opportunity to leverage its scale and relationships to become Australia's most coordinated, investment-ready and regionally connected jurisdiction. Achieving this will require strong leadership, transparent accountability, genuine partnerships with local government and industry, and sustained investment in the enabling infrastructure, workforce capability and regional systems that support long-term economic resilience.

Introduction and overarching comments

Council's support for the Strategy

Council strongly supports the intent of the draft *Tasmania's Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy* and welcomes the Tasmanian Government's focus on improving productivity, diversifying the economy, attracting investment and strengthening long-term economic resilience. The Strategy provides an important opportunity to establish a shared direction for Tasmania's economic future and to align government, industry and community effort around the actions required to support sustainable growth.

Role of local government as an economic partner

Local government is a critical economic partner in delivering the Strategy's objectives. Councils undertake strategic land use planning, facilitate housing and employment growth, deliver and maintain local infrastructure, coordinate place-based planning, support local businesses and advocate for catalytic investment. For growth municipalities such as Sorell, councils also play a key role in identifying investment-ready opportunities and working with State Government, infrastructure providers and industry to resolve practical delivery constraints.

Key themes:

Investment Readiness

Investment readiness should be a guiding principle of the final Strategy. Attracting private investment requires more than streamlined approval pathways; it requires serviced land, enabling infrastructure, housing supply, workforce capability, reliable utilities, digital connectivity and clear project sequencing. Aligning infrastructure, housing, land use planning and workforce development will be essential to unlocking private sector confidence and ensuring strategic opportunities can proceed in a timely and sustainable way.

Coordinated Governance

The Strategy will be most effective if supported by clear governance, defined roles and coordinated delivery across government. Tasmania's scale provides an opportunity to offer businesses and investors a genuinely integrated "one government" experience. This requires clear leadership, consistent advice, early involvement of local government, transparent decision-making and regular reporting on implementation progress.

Place-Based Delivery

Tasmania's regions have different economic strengths, constraints and opportunities. The Strategy should therefore support place-based delivery that recognises regional diversity and empowers local government as a strategic delivery partner. Regional

activation will be strengthened through shared data, coordinated infrastructure planning, aligned regional priorities and genuine partnerships between State Government, councils, industry and communities.

Implementation and Accountability

Council recommends that the final Strategy include measurable outcomes, annual public reporting and regular review to ensure it translates into practical action. A clear implementation framework should identify lead agencies, delivery partners, performance indicators and accountability mechanisms for each priority area. This will improve transparency, support continuous improvement and provide confidence that the Strategy is delivering tangible economic outcomes for Tasmania.

Response to Priority Areas

Priority 1 – Unlocking Private Investment

Sorell Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft *Tasmania's Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy* and strongly supports the objective of creating a more productive, investment-ready economy.

As one of Tasmania's fastest growing municipalities, Sorell is experiencing the opportunities and challenges associated with significant population growth, increasing housing demand and expanding employment opportunities. The municipality functions as the regional service centre for Tasmania's South East and continues to play an increasingly important role in supporting the Greater Hobart economy. This growth demonstrates that regional Tasmania can attract significant private investment when supported by strategic planning, enabling infrastructure and coordinated government action.

Council supports the proposed initiatives under Priority 1. However, the Strategy would be strengthened by recognising that unlocking private investment requires more than improving approval processes—it requires coordinated leadership, investment in enabling infrastructure, and genuine partnerships between the State Government, local government, industry and infrastructure providers.

Local Government as an Economic Delivery Partner

The Strategy appropriately recognises the importance of collaboration but underestimates the role local government plays in enabling private investment.

Councils are not only planning authorities. They identify future employment land, prepare strategic land use plans, deliver local infrastructure, coordinate place-making initiatives, facilitate housing growth, advocate for major infrastructure investment and maintain strong relationships with local businesses and communities. These activities create the conditions that enable private sector investment.

For growth municipalities such as Sorell, substantial work is undertaken well before private investment occurs, including preparing master plans, identifying infrastructure requirements, coordinating servicing agencies and developing investment-ready projects. The final Strategy should explicitly recognise local government as a strategic delivery partner in Tasmania's economic development system.

Investment Readiness Requires Enabling Infrastructure

Council supports strengthening Tasmania's investment proposition and developing a coordinated investment facilitation service.

However, investment attraction cannot be separated from infrastructure readiness.

Across Tasmania, the primary barriers to investment are increasingly related to the availability and timing of enabling infrastructure rather than investor interest. Road upgrades, water and sewer capacity, electricity infrastructure, stormwater networks,

telecommunications and community infrastructure are all fundamental prerequisites for housing, industrial development and business investment.

For example, Council's planning for the Sorell East Growth Area demonstrates that substantial private investment is contingent upon coordinated delivery of enabling infrastructure by all levels of government and utility providers. Similar challenges exist across many regional municipalities.

The Strategy should therefore recognise enabling infrastructure as economic infrastructure and prioritise investment that unlocks housing, employment land and private sector development.

A Coordinated Investment Facilitation System

Council strongly supports the proposal to establish a coordinated investment facilitation system for major projects.

Tasmania's competitive advantage is not simply that approvals should be faster; it is that, as a smaller jurisdiction, it could deliver a genuinely coordinated investment experience.

The proposed "front door" should therefore operate as a whole-of-government coordination function that provides proponents with clear guidance, facilitates early engagement with relevant agencies and councils, and assists in resolving issues before they delay project delivery.

The success of this initiative will depend upon:

- clear leadership and accountability;
- consistent advice across government agencies;
- transparent governance arrangements;
- defined service standards;
- early involvement of local government;
- continuous monitoring and review of system performance.

For investors, certainty and consistency are often more valuable than speed alone. Tasmania should position itself as a jurisdiction that delivers coordinated, predictable and transparent investment processes.

Planning Reform

Council supports planning reform that improves efficiency while maintaining confidence in Tasmania's planning system.

Planning reform should focus on improving the overall performance of the development system rather than solely on reducing statutory requirements. Delays often arise from infrastructure constraints, incomplete applications, referral processes or servicing limitations rather than council assessment timeframes.

Council supports reviewing matters requiring planning approval where this can be achieved without compromising strategic planning outcomes or community confidence. Recent planning reform has increased the size and complexity of the system without clear benefits. There is now the opportunity and need for evidence-based reform aimed at a fairer, faster, coordinated system more aligned to Tasmania's scale while also protecting our unique and intrinsic values.

Similarly, more predictable rezoning pathways are supported where they remain evidence-based and aligned with long-term settlement strategies. Accelerated rezonings should be accompanied by coordinated infrastructure planning to ensure newly zoned land can be developed in a timely and sustainable manner.

In addition to rezoning pathways, opportunities should be explored for new, coordinated pathways for urban renewal and redevelopment that unlock opportunities in well located areas that underperform in terms of employment or housing supply. Other jurisdictions have successful models that integrate infrastructure and land use planning on targeted renewal objectives.

Continuous Improvement of the Investment System

Council supports ongoing review of statutory, regulatory and procedural barriers to investment.

The review process should extend beyond planning legislation to consider barriers such as infrastructure funding, utility servicing, workforce capacity, inter-agency coordination and project sequencing.

Importantly, findings should inform a process of continuous improvement supported by public reporting and measurable performance indicators.

Tasmania's relatively small size provides an opportunity to develop an investment system characterised by strong leadership, clear guidance, transparent oversight and regular review. This should be viewed as a competitive advantage.

Economic Future Act

The consultation draft refers to the proposed *Economic Future Act* as a key implementation mechanism but provides limited information regarding its intended purpose or status.

Council recommends that the final Strategy include further information regarding:

- the objectives of the proposed legislation;
- its relationship with existing planning and economic development legislation;
- anticipated implementation timeframes; and
- how it will support delivery of the Strategy.

Providing this context will enable stakeholders to better understand the proposed governance framework and provide more informed feedback.

Benchmarking

Council supports learning from best practice across Australia and internationally.

However, benchmarking should focus on jurisdictions that demonstrate effective governance and investment facilitation rather than simply those with the largest or most complex planning systems.

While New South Wales has introduced significant reforms, it also operates within one of Australia's most complex planning and approvals frameworks. Tasmania should instead seek to leverage its scale by developing a simpler, more integrated investment system that delivers high levels of certainty, coordination and responsiveness.

More suitable benchmarks may be found in jurisdictions like South Australia, New Zealand, small provinces in Canada and even Scandinavian Regional Investment models may be worth exploring.

Recommendations

Council recommends that Priority 1 be strengthened by:

1. Explicitly recognising local government as a strategic delivery partner in attracting and facilitating private investment.
2. Recognising enabling infrastructure as essential economic infrastructure and aligning infrastructure investment with land use planning and housing delivery.
3. Establishing a coordinated investment facilitation system based on leadership, guidance, oversight, accountability and continuous improvement.
4. Providing greater clarity regarding the proposed *Economic Future Act* and its role in implementing the Strategy.
5. Developing statewide investment pipelines and regional investment plans in partnership with councils.
6. Benchmarking Tasmania against jurisdictions that demonstrate effective governance and proportionate regulation, recognising Tasmania's opportunity to differentiate itself through simplicity, coordination and responsiveness rather than scale.

Council considers that Tasmania has a unique opportunity to position itself as Australia's most coordinated and investment-ready jurisdiction. Achieving this will require not only streamlined processes but also strong partnerships, integrated infrastructure planning, clear governance and recognition that sustainable economic growth is delivered through collaboration between the State Government, local government, industry and the private sector.

Priority 2 – Accelerating Growth and Innovation

Overall comments

Council supports the objective of accelerating innovation, commercialisation and business growth as key drivers of Tasmania's long-term productivity and economic diversification. The proposed initiatives appropriately recognise the importance of research, innovation, access to capital, export development and strategic investment.

However, Priority 2 would benefit from a stronger implementation framework. While the Strategy identifies a range of important initiatives, it provides limited clarity regarding how these activities will be coordinated across government or who will be responsible for driving delivery.

Innovation systems are most effective when businesses experience a coordinated and easily navigated support network. Without clear leadership and accountability, there is a risk that businesses—particularly small and medium enterprises—continue to face fragmented programs, multiple points of contact and duplicated processes.

Leadership and coordination

Council considers that the final Strategy should clearly identify the lead agency responsible for coordinating implementation of the economic diversification agenda.

The Office of the Coordinator-General appears well positioned to undertake a system leadership role by coordinating agencies, facilitating major investment opportunities and ensuring businesses can navigate government support efficiently.

Similarly, the Tasmanian Development Board has an important role in supporting strategically significant businesses and projects through its investment functions.

The Strategy would be strengthened by clearly defining the complementary roles of these organisations and how they will work alongside State agencies, local government, research institutions and industry.

Rather than creating additional governance structures, Tasmania should leverage its relatively small scale to provide businesses with a coordinated "one government" experience characterised by:

- clear leadership;
- coordinated service delivery;
- defined agency responsibilities;
- transparent accountability; and
- regular performance reporting.

Research and commercialisation

Council supports initiatives to strengthen collaboration between research institutions and industry.

Innovation is most valuable when research outcomes can be translated into commercial products, services and businesses.

The Strategy should encourage stronger regional connections between universities, vocational education providers, local industry and councils to ensure innovation benefits businesses across Tasmania rather than concentrating activity within major urban centres.

Councils can assist by facilitating local industry networks, supporting innovation precincts and identifying opportunities where research capability aligns with regional economic strengths.

Business growth and access to capital

Council supports additional assistance for early-stage and scaling businesses to improve access to finance, markets and customers.

Many regional businesses require practical assistance to navigate the wide range of State and Commonwealth funding programs that already exist.

Rather than introducing numerous additional programs, consideration should be given to improving coordination, simplifying access and providing businesses with clearer pathways through the existing support ecosystem.

This aligns closely with the proposed investment facilitation approach outlined under Priority 1.

Green economy and sovereign capability

Council supports coordinated assistance to enable Tasmanian businesses to access emerging opportunities associated with:

- renewable energy;
- advanced manufacturing;
- critical minerals;
- sovereign capability;
- defence industries;
- circular economy initiatives; and
- export market diversification.

Regional councils can play an important role by identifying local capability, supporting industrial land planning and facilitating strategic infrastructure required to attract new industries.

The Strategy should recognise local government as a partner in identifying regional comparative advantages and supporting industry development.

Tasmanian Development Board

Council supports the continued investment role of the Tasmanian Development Board.

To maximise effectiveness, the Strategy should clearly articulate:

- the Board's strategic investment priorities;
- how investment decisions will align with the Strategy;
- how success will be measured; and
- how investment activities will be coordinated with the Office of the Coordinator-General and other delivery agencies.

Clear governance arrangements will improve transparency and provide greater confidence for industry and investors.

Recommendations

Council recommends that Priority 2 be strengthened by:

1. Clearly identifying the lead agency responsible for coordinating implementation of the Strategy.
2. Defining the respective roles of the Office of the Coordinator-General, the Tasmanian Development Board and other delivery agencies to avoid duplication and improve accountability.
3. Establishing a coordinated "one government" approach that simplifies engagement for businesses.
4. Strengthening regional innovation partnerships involving local government, research institutions and industry.
5. Improving coordination of existing business support programs before establishing additional initiatives.
6. Publishing measurable performance indicators and regular reporting on innovation and business growth outcomes.

Priority 3 – Lifting Productivity

Sorell Council supports the objective of improving Tasmania's productivity and recognises that stronger productivity growth is fundamental to increasing wages, improving living standards and enhancing the State's long-term competitiveness.

The proposed initiatives appropriately recognise the importance of digital capability, technology adoption, improved data and regulatory reform. However, the Strategy would benefit from a broader understanding of productivity that reflects the diversity of Tasmania's regional economies and acknowledges the enabling role of infrastructure, connectivity and place-based investment.

Understanding Tasmania's Productivity Challenge

Council supports further work to better understand the structural factors contributing to Tasmania's productivity performance.

In addition to capital intensity, management capability, business scale and technology adoption, consideration should also be given to the impacts of:

- infrastructure capacity;
- transport accessibility;
- housing availability;
- workforce mobility;
- digital connectivity;
- regional service provision; and
- regulatory complexity across multiple agencies.

These factors can have a significant influence on business productivity, particularly in regional municipalities where access to markets, labour and infrastructure differs from metropolitan areas.

A stronger evidence base should recognise that productivity constraints vary across industries and regions and that targeted, place-based responses will often deliver better outcomes than statewide initiatives alone.

Recognising Regional Industry

Council supports initiatives to improve productivity across Tasmania's largest service sectors, including care, construction, retail and tourism.

However, the Strategy should also recognise the importance of productivity improvements within Tasmania's traditional and regionally significant industries, including agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and food production.

While these industries may represent a smaller share of Gross State Product than the broader services sector, they remain fundamental to the economic resilience, employment and prosperity of many regional communities.

Productivity improvements in these sectors have flow-on benefits for regional supply chains, manufacturing, logistics, exports and local employment.

The Strategy should ensure that regional industries continue to receive appropriate policy attention alongside service-sector productivity initiatives.

Digital Connectivity

Council strongly supports improving digital connectivity as an enabler of productivity.

However, reliable connectivity remains uneven across Tasmania, particularly in regional and rural communities.

Municipalities such as the Tasman Peninsula continue to experience mobile coverage limitations and inconsistent broadband performance that constrain business operations, remote working, education, tourism and emergency management.

Without reliable digital infrastructure, many of the Strategy's proposed initiatives—including technology adoption, digital skills development, artificial intelligence, cloud-based business systems and online service delivery—cannot be fully realised.

Council recommends that digital connectivity be recognised as essential economic infrastructure and that the Strategy support continued collaboration with the Australian Government and telecommunications providers to address regional connectivity gaps.

Technology Adoption

Council supports demonstration programs and practical initiatives that assist businesses to adopt new technologies.

For many small and medium enterprises, barriers are less about awareness than capability, confidence and access to practical support.

Programs should therefore focus on:

- practical demonstration projects;
- peer learning;
- regional delivery models;
- industry partnerships; and
- advisory services that help businesses identify technologies capable of delivering measurable productivity improvements.

Local government can assist by facilitating regional business networks and supporting local innovation initiatives where appropriate.

Digital Skills

Council supports targeted investment in digital capability across Tasmania's workforce.

Digital skills development should recognise the differing needs of:

- small business;
- local government;
- community organisations;
- primary industries;
- manufacturing;
- tourism; and
- emerging technology sectors.

Building digital capability across regional communities will be essential to ensuring the benefits of technological change are shared across Tasmania.

Data and Digital Government

Council supports improved access to high-quality public datasets.

Better access to government data has the potential to improve planning, investment decisions, infrastructure coordination and service delivery across all levels of government.

Where appropriate, datasets should be standardised and made accessible through open-data principles while maintaining appropriate privacy and security protections.

Improved data sharing between State Government, local government and infrastructure providers would also assist strategic land use planning, infrastructure sequencing and investment readiness.

Red Tape Reduction

Council supports ongoing efforts to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden where this improves productivity without compromising public confidence or statutory objectives.

As noted under Priority 1, reducing red tape should form part of a broader program of continuous improvement that includes:

- clearer guidance;
- improved coordination;
- consistent interpretation of legislation;
- better digital systems;
- transparent service standards; and
- regular review of system performance.

For many businesses, certainty and predictability deliver greater productivity benefits than simply reducing regulatory requirements.

Recommendations

Council recommends that Priority 3 be strengthened by:

1. Recognising that productivity challenges differ across regions and adopting place-based responses where appropriate.

2. Expanding the productivity agenda to include regionally significant industries such as agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and food production alongside major service sectors.
3. Recognising digital connectivity as essential economic infrastructure and prioritising improved mobile and broadband coverage in regional Tasmania, including areas such as the Tasman Peninsula where connectivity remains a significant constraint.
4. Supporting practical technology adoption through demonstration programs, regional partnerships and advisory services for small and medium enterprises.
5. Improving access to shared government datasets to support planning, infrastructure coordination and investment readiness.
6. Continuing regulatory reform through improved governance, coordination and digital service delivery, rather than focusing solely on reducing regulation.

Council considers that lifting productivity requires more than improving business capability. It requires coordinated investment in infrastructure, digital connectivity, workforce capability and regional development so that businesses across Tasmania are equally able to participate in the State's economic transformation.

Priority 4 – Activating Our Regions

Sorell Council strongly supports the inclusion of a dedicated priority focused on regional activation. Regional Tasmania is central to the State's future economic prosperity, and sustainable economic diversification will only be achieved through place-based approaches that recognise the distinct strengths, opportunities and challenges of individual regions.

Council welcomes the proposed initiatives but considers the Strategy would be strengthened by placing greater emphasis on implementation, governance and genuine intergovernmental collaboration.

Regional Partnerships

Council supports reviewing and aligning regional partnerships and strengthening regional capability.

However, regional collaboration across Tasmania currently varies considerably in maturity, governance, capability and resourcing. While many productive partnerships exist, there is no consistent statewide framework that clearly defines regional roles, responsibilities or expected outcomes.

The Strategy should establish a more coordinated approach to regional governance that:

- clearly defines the purpose of regional partnerships;
- aligns regional priorities across State Government, local government and industry;
- supports evidence-based regional planning;
- establishes measurable outcomes; and
- provides regular review of partnership effectiveness.

Regional collaboration should become an enduring feature of Tasmania's economic development system rather than relying on individual projects or relationships.

Local Government as a Regional Development Partner

Council welcomes the recognition of local government throughout this priority.

Councils play a central role in identifying regional opportunities, coordinating strategic land use planning, delivering local infrastructure, supporting industry development and advocating for catalytic investment.

The Strategy should recognise councils as ongoing delivery partners in regional economic development rather than solely as consultation stakeholders.

Formal mechanisms for collaboration between the State Government, councils, Regional Development Australia, regional organisations and industry would improve coordination and investment outcomes.

Regional Evidence and Data

Council strongly supports improving regional economic, demographic and liveability data.

Access to consistent, high-quality regional data will strengthen strategic planning, infrastructure investment, workforce planning and economic development decision-making across all levels of government.

Where possible, datasets should be shared through common platforms and developed collaboratively with councils to improve consistency and reduce duplication.

Regional Investment Readiness

Council supports working collaboratively to identify regional strengths, workforce requirements, catalytic infrastructure opportunities and planning barriers.

Investment readiness should become a central objective of regional development.

Preparing regions for investment requires coordinated planning for:

- industrial land;
- housing;
- transport infrastructure;
- utilities;
- workforce capability;
- community infrastructure; and
- environmental constraints.

Many regional councils have already undertaken significant strategic planning work that could contribute to an improved, coordinated statewide investment pipeline.

The Strategy should support regional investment readiness through business case development, precinct planning and enabling infrastructure planning.

Housing and Employment Land

Council supports establishing a rolling mechanism to monitor the supply of industrial land and well-located housing.

However, the Strategy should distinguish between the availability of zoned land and the availability of development-ready land.

Across many regional municipalities, housing supply is increasingly constrained by infrastructure capacity and servicing availability rather than the planning framework alone.

Water and sewer infrastructure, electricity capacity, transport infrastructure, stormwater networks and other enabling infrastructure frequently determine whether land can be developed in practice.

Accordingly, accelerating strategic land use planning should be accompanied by coordinated infrastructure planning and investment to ensure identified growth areas can be delivered.

This will be particularly important for regional communities experiencing rapid workforce growth associated with major industry and infrastructure projects.

Alignment of Regional Strategies

Council recommends that the final Strategy encourage alignment between regional advocacy strategies, regional economic development plans and the *Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy*.

Developing a common evidence base and shared regional priorities will strengthen infrastructure advocacy, improve coordination across governments and provide greater certainty for industry and investors.

Recommendations

Council recommends that Priority 4 be strengthened by:

1. Establishing a consistent statewide framework for regional partnerships with clear governance, accountability and performance measures.
2. Recognising local government as a strategic delivery partner in regional economic development.
3. Supporting regional investment readiness through coordinated planning, business case development and enabling infrastructure.
4. Distinguishing between zoned land and development-ready land, recognising that infrastructure capacity is increasingly the principal constraint on housing and industrial development.
5. Improving access to regional economic and demographic data to support evidence-based decision-making.
6. Encouraging alignment between regional advocacy frameworks and the priorities of the *Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy*.
7. Implement a growth monitoring framework to understand changes in the supply and demand of residential, industrial and commercial land closely linked to infrastructure planning.

Council considers that successful regional activation depends on more than identifying opportunities. It requires coordinated leadership, integrated infrastructure planning, strong regional partnerships and sustained collaboration between the State Government, local government, industry and communities. By building these foundations, Tasmania can better harness the unique strengths of its regions and ensure that economic growth is shared across the State.

Priority 5 – Growing Our Capability

Sorell Council supports the objective of strengthening Tasmania's workforce capability and recognises that a skilled, adaptable and resilient workforce is fundamental to long-term economic diversification and productivity.

The proposed initiatives appropriately recognise the importance of workforce intelligence, education and training, migration, employment services and emerging technologies. Council supports these priorities and considers they will be strengthened by a more integrated, place-based approach that recognises the relationship between workforce capability, housing, liveability and regional development.

Workforce Intelligence

Council supports improving the accessibility and quality of workforce, training and labour market data.

Timely and reliable regional workforce information will assist governments, councils, industry, education providers and communities to better anticipate workforce shortages, align training pathways and support investment decisions.

Regional labour market information should be sufficiently detailed to identify local workforce trends, emerging industries and future skills requirements rather than relying solely on statewide averages.

Improved data sharing will also support evidence-based infrastructure planning, housing delivery and regional economic development.

Skills Awareness and Career Pathways

Council supports initiatives to improve awareness of employment opportunities and career pathways across Tasmania.

Young people, career changers and existing workers should have access to clear information about occupations in demand, local training opportunities and future workforce needs.

This work should be undertaken collaboratively with schools, vocational education providers, universities, industry, local government and regional organisations to ensure career pathways reflect the economic strengths and employment opportunities of individual regions.

Workforce Attraction and Retention

Council supports stronger alignment between migration, international education, skills policy and housing.

However, attracting workers to regional Tasmania requires more than employment opportunities alone.

Housing availability, transport, childcare, health services, digital connectivity, recreation and community infrastructure all influence where people choose to live and work.

The Strategy should therefore recognise workforce attraction and retention as a whole-of-government responsibility that integrates economic development with housing, infrastructure and liveability planning.

This is particularly important for rapidly growing regional municipalities experiencing strong employment growth and increasing demand for housing and services.

Regional Employment Services

Council supports continued advocacy for Australian Government initiatives that respond to Tasmania's unique labour market challenges, including place-based employment services such as the Regional Jobs Hub model.

Regional employment initiatives can play an important role in connecting local employers with job seekers, supporting workforce participation and responding to regional labour market conditions.

The Strategy should continue to support collaborative regional employment models that are flexible, locally informed and capable of responding to changing workforce needs.

Artificial Intelligence and Workforce Transition

Council supports preparing workers, employers and communities for the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence and automation.

The focus should extend beyond technology adoption to include workforce transition, leadership capability, organisational change and responsible implementation.

Small businesses, local government and community organisations will require practical guidance and support to understand how emerging technologies can improve productivity while maintaining appropriate governance, privacy, cybersecurity and workforce wellbeing.

Technology should be viewed as a tool that enhances human capability rather than simply replacing existing roles.

Recommendations

Council recommends that Priority 5 be strengthened by:

1. Improving access to detailed regional labour market intelligence to support workforce planning and investment decisions.
2. Recognising workforce attraction and retention as a whole-of-government issue that integrates skills, housing, infrastructure and liveability.

3. Supporting place-based employment initiatives that connect local employers with regional workforce opportunities.
4. Strengthening collaboration between education providers, industry, councils and regional organisations to improve career pathways and workforce planning.
5. Supporting businesses, local government and communities to prepare for artificial intelligence and automation through practical capability-building programs and responsible implementation frameworks.

Council considers that developing Tasmania's workforce capability requires an integrated approach that combines education and training with housing, infrastructure, liveability and regional development. By strengthening these connections, Tasmania will be better positioned to attract, retain and develop the skilled workforce required to support long-term economic growth and resilience.

Priority 6 – Strengthening Infrastructure

Sorell Council strongly supports the recognition of infrastructure as a foundational enabler of Tasmania's economic diversification, productivity and regional development.

Infrastructure decisions influence where housing can be delivered, where businesses can invest, how efficiently freight moves, how communities grow and how regional economies develop. Accordingly, Council supports greater coordination between economic strategy, infrastructure planning and land use planning.

The proposed initiatives provide an appropriate strategic direction. However, the Strategy would benefit from greater clarity regarding governance, infrastructure prioritisation and implementation.

Integrated Infrastructure Planning

Council supports coordinating economic priorities, infrastructure investment and land readiness.

Successful economic development depends upon aligning infrastructure investment with anticipated housing, employment and population growth.

Infrastructure planning should integrate:

- land use planning;
- transport;
- water and sewer services;
- energy;
- telecommunications;
- community infrastructure; and
- environmental planning.

This integrated approach should extend across State Government agencies, Government Business Enterprises, local government and infrastructure providers to ensure investment decisions are aligned and sequenced effectively.

Infrastructure Governance

Throughout the consultation draft there are references to Infrastructure Tasmania, Government Business Enterprises, strategic energy planning and the Strategic Infrastructure Framework.

While these initiatives are acknowledged, the Strategy provides limited information regarding how these organisations and frameworks interact to deliver coordinated infrastructure outcomes.

Council recommends that the final Strategy clearly articulate:

- governance arrangements;
- agency responsibilities;

- decision-making processes;
- coordination mechanisms; and
- accountability for infrastructure delivery.

Clearly defining these relationships will provide greater confidence that infrastructure priorities will be implemented in a coordinated manner rather than through separate agency processes.

Tasmania's relatively small scale presents an opportunity to deliver integrated infrastructure planning through strong system leadership and collaboration across government.

Infrastructure Readiness

Council supports improving coordination between infrastructure investment and land readiness.

However, infrastructure readiness should extend beyond strategic planning to include project sequencing, funding certainty, utility capacity and timely delivery.

Across regional Tasmania, the availability of serviced land is increasingly constrained by infrastructure capacity and cost rather than land supply alone.

The Strategy should therefore recognise enabling infrastructure—including water, sewerage, electricity, transport, stormwater and telecommunications—as essential economic infrastructure required to unlock housing and industrial development.

Infrastructure Funding and Developer Contributions

Council supports developing a fair and transparent approach to infrastructure pricing and developer contributions.

The proposed framework should:

- provide certainty for developers;
- fairly allocate costs;
- support housing affordability;
- recognise regional infrastructure constraints; and
- avoid creating unintended barriers to investment.

Infrastructure contribution arrangements should also recognise that many enabling infrastructure projects deliver broad public benefits and cannot reasonably be funded solely through development contributions.

Further consultation with local government will be essential as this work progresses, particularly given the recommendations emerging from the *Future of Local Government Review*.

Strategic Energy Planning

Council supports coordinated strategic energy planning that enables economic growth while supporting Tasmania's transition to a low-emissions economy.

The consultation draft refers to a range of existing energy policy mechanisms and community service obligations but provides limited explanation of how these arrangements support the Strategy's objectives.

Council recommends that the final Strategy include clearer explanation of:

- the intended role of strategic energy planning;
- how energy investment priorities will be coordinated;
- how strategic energy users will be assessed; and
- how existing policy mechanisms support regional economic development.

Providing greater clarity will assist stakeholders in understanding how energy policy contributes to Tasmania's broader economic objectives.

Strategic Infrastructure Framework

Council welcomes the reference to Infrastructure Tasmania's Strategic Infrastructure Framework.

Given the importance of this document to implementation, the Strategy should more clearly explain how the Framework will:

- influence infrastructure prioritisation;
- inform government investment decisions;
- align with regional priorities;
- interact with local government planning; and
- support delivery of the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy.

Explicitly describing these relationships will improve transparency and demonstrate how existing strategic frameworks will be translated into practical investment decisions.

First-Mover Infrastructure

Council supports targeted initiatives that address first-mover disadvantage, particularly where early infrastructure investment can unlock substantial private investment.

Priority should be given to infrastructure that:

- enables housing supply;
- supports employment land;
- improves regional connectivity;
- facilitates digital capability; and

- strengthens regional resilience.

Strategic public investment in enabling infrastructure can reduce investment risk and encourage earlier private sector participation.

Recommendations

Council recommends that Priority 6 be strengthened by:

1. Clearly defining governance arrangements and responsibilities for coordinating infrastructure planning across State Government agencies, Government Business Enterprises and local government.
2. Recognising enabling infrastructure as a fundamental prerequisite for housing, industrial development and private investment.
3. Strengthening integration between economic planning, infrastructure investment and strategic land use planning.
4. Providing greater explanation of key implementation frameworks, including the Strategic Infrastructure Framework, strategic energy planning and proposed infrastructure pricing reforms.
5. Developing infrastructure investment priorities that recognise regional growth, infrastructure sequencing and long-term economic development outcomes.
6. Continuing to work collaboratively with local government on infrastructure funding and developer contribution reforms.

Council considers that infrastructure is not simply a supporting element of economic development—it is one of its principal enablers. A coordinated, transparent and evidence-based infrastructure planning system will be essential to delivering the investment, productivity and regional outcomes envisaged by the Strategy.

Implementation Framework – Delivering the Strategy

Throughout this submission, Council has identified the importance of moving from strategic intent to coordinated delivery. While the draft Strategy establishes a clear vision and identifies priority actions, its effectiveness will depend on clear governance arrangements, defined responsibilities, measurable outcomes and transparent reporting.

Council recommends that the final Strategy be supported by a simple implementation framework that identifies lead responsibilities, delivery partners and accountability mechanisms as per:

Element	**Suggested Inclusion**
Lead agency	Office of the Coordinator-General (or nominated lead)
Delivery partners	State agencies, Government Business Enterprises, local government, Regional Development Australia, industry
Governance	Cross-agency steering committee with local government representation
Reporting	Annual public implementation report
Performance measures	KPIs aligned to each priority
Review	Independent review after three to five years

Closing Remarks

Sorell Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Tasmania's Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy and commends the Tasmanian Government for preparing a long-term framework that seeks to improve productivity, diversify the economy and strengthen Tasmania's long-term prosperity.

Council considers the Strategy provides a strong strategic foundation and appropriately identifies the key economic opportunities and challenges facing Tasmania. Council supports the Strategy's focus on investment attraction, productivity, innovation, workforce capability, regional development and enabling infrastructure.

While the strategic direction is well articulated, the consultation draft places greater emphasis on *what* Tasmania should achieve than *how* these outcomes will be delivered. Across the six priorities, Council has identified a consistent opportunity to strengthen the implementation framework by providing greater clarity regarding governance, leadership, coordination, accountability and delivery responsibilities.

Tasmania's greatest competitive advantage is not simply its size, but its ability to operate as a coordinated and agile jurisdiction. The State could deliver an economic

development system that provides investors, businesses and communities with greater certainty, consistency and responsiveness than is achievable in larger jurisdictions.

To realise this opportunity, the final Strategy should recognise that economic transformation depends not only on policy settings, but also on the systems, partnerships and enabling infrastructure that support investment and growth.

Local government as a strategic delivery partner

Throughout the Strategy, local government is identified as an important stakeholder. Council considers this role should be strengthened.

Councils are strategic delivery partners that:

- undertake long-term land use planning;
- facilitate development;
- deliver and maintain local infrastructure;
- support housing growth;
- coordinate place-based planning;
- partner with industry and regional organisations;
- advocate for catalytic infrastructure; and
- help create investment-ready communities.

Recognising local government as an implementation partner throughout the Strategy will strengthen collaboration and improve delivery outcomes.

Investment readiness

A consistent theme throughout Council's submission is the importance of investment readiness.

Successful investment depends upon far more than efficient approval pathways. It requires coordinated planning, enabling infrastructure, serviced employment land, housing supply, workforce capability, reliable utilities, digital connectivity and effective collaboration across all levels of government.

The Strategy should position investment readiness as a guiding principle that links infrastructure planning, economic development, workforce planning and regional activation.

Governance and implementation

Council recommends the final Strategy include a clear implementation framework that identifies:

- lead agencies responsible for each priority;
- delivery partners, including local government;
- governance and coordination arrangements;
- measurable performance indicators;
- public reporting mechanisms; and

- regular review of implementation outcomes.

Several initiatives reference existing organisations and frameworks—including the Office of the Coordinator-General, the Tasmanian Development Board, Infrastructure Tasmania, the Strategic Infrastructure Framework and proposed legislative reforms—without clearly explaining how these entities will work together to deliver the Strategy.

Greater clarity regarding roles, responsibilities and decision-making arrangements will improve transparency, accountability and stakeholder confidence.

Similarly, where the Strategy references proposed reforms or initiatives—such as the proposed *Economic Future Act*, strategic energy planning, infrastructure pricing reforms and other implementation mechanisms—additional explanation of their purpose, status and relationship to existing policy frameworks would assist stakeholders to better understand the proposed direction and provide informed feedback.

Enabling infrastructure

Council considers enabling infrastructure to be a central theme that underpins every priority within the Strategy.

Transport, water and sewer infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, stormwater and community infrastructure are fundamental to unlocking housing, industrial land, private investment and regional development.

The final Strategy should explicitly recognise enabling infrastructure as economic infrastructure and strengthen the integration of infrastructure planning, land use planning and economic development.

Place-based economic development

Tasmania's regions have diverse economic strengths, challenges and opportunities. Regional activation should therefore be supported through place-based planning, evidence-based decision-making and genuine partnerships between the State Government, local government, industry and communities.

Regional collaboration should be supported by consistent governance arrangements, shared regional data, coordinated investment planning and alignment between regional advocacy, infrastructure priorities and the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy.

Productivity through coordination

The Strategy appropriately identifies opportunities to improve productivity through innovation, technology and workforce capability.

Council considers equivalent emphasis should also be placed on improving the productivity of government systems themselves.

Predictable planning processes, coordinated infrastructure investment, shared data, consistent regulatory interpretation and integrated service delivery will improve business confidence and reduce the transaction costs associated with investment.

For many businesses, certainty and coordination are as important as speed.

Summary Recommendations

Council recommends that the final Strategy:

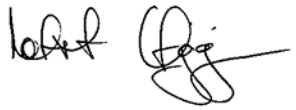
1. Recognise local government as a strategic delivery partner throughout implementation.
2. Establish a clear governance and implementation framework with defined leadership, accountability, performance measures and public reporting.
3. Position investment readiness as a guiding principle linking infrastructure, housing, workforce development and economic growth.
4. Recognise enabling infrastructure as fundamental economic infrastructure and strengthen integration between infrastructure planning, strategic land use planning and economic development.
5. Adopt place-based approaches to regional development that reflect the differing needs and opportunities of Tasmania's regions.
6. Improve coordination across government agencies, Government Business Enterprises, local government and regional partners to provide businesses and investors with a genuine "one government" experience.
7. Provide greater clarity regarding key implementation mechanisms, including the proposed *Economic Future Act*, strategic infrastructure planning, energy policy and infrastructure funding reforms.
8. Continue to strengthen regional workforce capability, innovation, digital connectivity and technology adoption through coordinated partnerships across government, industry, education providers and local communities.
9. Develop a statewide investment-ready project pipeline that aligns strategic planning, enabling infrastructure and regional priorities.
10. Commit to regular monitoring, public reporting and periodic review to ensure the Strategy remains responsive to changing economic conditions and continues to deliver measurable outcomes.

Council appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the development of this important Strategy and looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Tasmanian Government, industry, regional partners and communities to support a resilient, productive and diversified Tasmanian economy.

The Strategy presents an important opportunity to establish not only a shared vision for Tasmania's economic future, but also a coordinated delivery framework that

leverages the strengths of all levels of government. By combining strong leadership, clear governance, place-based planning and sustained investment in enabling infrastructure, Tasmania can position itself as Australia's most coordinated, investment-ready and regionally connected jurisdiction.

Council considers that the success of the Strategy will ultimately depend on implementation discipline. Strong governance, clear accountability and transparent reporting will ensure the Strategy becomes a practical framework for action rather than simply a statement of intent.



Robert Higgins
Chief Executive Officer