

32-34 Georges Bay Esplanade  
St Helens Tasmania 7216  
T: 03 6376 7900 | ABN 96 017 131 248



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Email: [consultation@stategrowth.tas.gov.au](mailto:consultation@stategrowth.tas.gov.au)

**Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy –  
Break O'Day Council submission**

The Break O'Day Council would like to express their appreciation for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Tasmanian Population Strategy Consultation Paper. The Strategy has particular importance to Council due to its social, economic and environmental impacts.

Please find attached Break O'Day Council's submission to the Discussion Paper.

Yours sincerely

John Brown  
**General Manager**



Break O'Day  
COUNCIL

# Tasmanian Population Strategy Discussion Paper

Break O'Day Council submission



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from the **mountains** to the **sea** | [www.bodc.tas.gov.au](http://www.bodc.tas.gov.au)

# Submission Response

## Section 1: Enable planning arrangements that improve liveability

### 1.1 In the next five to 30 years, what liveability-related issues do you see impacting your sector, or the community you live in?

#### **Affordable Housing**

Affordable Housing within the Break O'Day region is a major concern for the community. It affects all stakeholders, including residents, business owners and prospective residents. The lack of suitable housing plays a key role in communities' well-being and economic productivity. Within the Break O'Day community, 2 in 5 renters (38.8%) experience rental stress (rent is greater than 30% of their household income). Affordable housing includes diverse housing options and is inclusive of social housing, rentals and ownership.

Affordable housing requires strategic planning rather than a narrow focus on the number of houses being delivered. Houses not only need to be affordable but well-located (close to infrastructure, amenities etc) to build sustainable and resilient communities. Integrated planning relating to housing and population that relies on updated data and is reviewed periodically is crucial to deliver good planning outcomes. This includes the identification of long-term land supply and appropriate infill development that encourages well-serviced and sustainable housing **in the right places**. This is particularly relevant for communities experiencing an increase in an ageing population.

#### **Impact of visitor accommodation on housing availability**

At this time, there are varying sources of data and opinions that tend to contradict in respect to visitor accommodation impact on housing availability. In order to address the housing crisis, we must understand the underlying causes – not just band aid solutions that will most likely cause serious headaches in the years to come.

#### **Infrastructure adaptation to climate change**

An increase of climatic events will result in poor quality and maintenance of roads, storm water pollution, increase of flooding risk and damage to infrastructure etc. presents serious problems for the community and government bodies.

#### **Access to Allied Health Services**

Within the Break O'Day region, access to allied health professions is severely under-resourced. Due to a lack of local provision or a lengthy wait time, Break O'Day residents travel to Launceston or Hobart for some (or all) health services. Not only does this pressure Launceston and Hobart services but it is also financially and socially burdensome. For example, residents may:

- Use their holiday leave for travel to services

- Take children out of school
- Increased cost of travel negatively impacting financial freedom
- Not address legitimate health concerns as a result of access difficulty

This is particularly relevant for the Break O'Day community, which has the sixth lowest Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas in Tasmania (SEIFA).

**1.2 What in your view are the top two opportunities that have the potential to increase liveability? Please share potential partnerships and other approaches that could assist in progressing these opportunities.**

**Providing 'living in place' housing and alternative rental housing provision and ownership**

The Break O'Day region has an ageing population with 36% of households being lone occupants. Financial incentives to transition existing housing stock to suit the homeowners' stage in life and provide potential rental housing provisions should be considered. How can we encourage lone occupants living in 2-3+ bedroom homes to rent out spare rooms?

Delivery of worker accommodation with alternative ownership models including co-ownership should be further explored. State government involvement in the delivery of worker accommodation should not benefit sole operators but be viewed as a benefit to a variety of operators regardless of scale or government agenda.

**Robust population projections to inform decision making**

The consultation paper utilises *Department of Treasury and Finance* and the *Australian Government's Centre for Population* population projection data which diverge considerably. This demonstrates the need for accessible, reliable and relevant data for those making short, medium or long-term decisions in relation to planning and the provision of infrastructure and services at a state or local government area level. Break O'Day Council has obtained advice that the utilisation of the Department of Treasury and Finance for strategic planning is ill-advised as a result of its linear growth model application.

Therefore, the state government needs to produce robust population projections at a state and local government level that is accessible. This will enable local governments to make comprehensive and population-informed strategic decisions in terms of investment in infrastructure, services and amenities and where these investments need to be made in regard to composition and change over time.

**1.3 How could all levels of government, business and community organisations work together to design and plan services to improve liveability?**

- **Understand and provide a clear description of what liveability means to Tasmanians.** This requires a general understanding of liveability fundamentals as well as place-based liveability markers that are specific and important to each community.
- For example, the concept of urban amenity and liveability involves a wide range of aspects such as quality of a place, aesthetics, the physical and urban design, how the place is used,

and the extent to which a place supports quality of life, health, and the general well-being of residents. Matters of concern here would include urban sprawl, urban intensification including the loss of backyards (important places to play, socialise and grow foods amongst other things). Loss of open spaces and green spaces, tree canopies, increased flooding risks (particularly when we factor in climate change) and stormwater pollution.

- **Recognise and provide place-based solutions to liveability issues.**
- For example, consideration needs to be given to availability of transport particularly within regional and rural areas. It is one of the greatest roadblocks in this area to obtaining employment, attending appointments etc. where there can be large distances to cover. There are also impacts of traffic congestion brought about by increased visitor rates, poor road quality and ongoing repairs, to consider. Safety considerations also become paramount for all, but for those who are more vulnerable, due to disability etc. mothers with small children and those who choose to use a bicycle as a more sustainable form of transport.
- Recognise the critical linkage between the Tasmanian Planning Policies and their implementation through the Regional Land Use Strategies, Tasmanian Planning Scheme and Local Provisions Schedules, including the critical role that land use planning plays in many of Government strategies related to land use, strategic policy and liveability within Tasmania and for Tasmanians. The strength of this strategy to 'design and plan services to improve liveability' relies upon the Tasmanian Planning Scheme to implement.



## Section 2: Reduce unnecessary barriers to those wishing to have and raise children

### 2.1. To increase workforce participation, how can workplaces in Tasmanian become more adaptable as the future of work changes?

#### Embracing flexible working practices for parents

In the Break O'Day region, access to child care is limited which restricts parents in their ability to enter/re-enter the workforce and work full-time. Speaking with local providers, it is not necessarily the supply of childcare workers, but the provision of spaces that is the main issue. In some instances,

- It is not economical to return to work due to the cost of travel to take their child to day care and then travel to work. Break O'Day is a large municipality which results in parents working all over the region but only has child care options in St Marys and St Helens. Parents have to consider their work location alongside the ability to travel to a childcare centre when entering the workforce or changing jobs.
- No after or before-school care is offered within the Fingal Valley region. An example of how this impacted local workers was a nurse who accepted a position at St Marys Hospital only to then be unable to enter the workforce as she can't work before 8am or after 5pm due to lack of child care options.

Raising awareness among employers about how they may embrace and support employees who have children and require flexibility should be made.

How can employers be proactive in addressing child care issues for the employees? Local examples within the community include:

- Employers hiring childcare workers during the holiday periods for their employee's children
- Offering contracts in non-traditional industries such as the hospitality industry. This allows workers to bank hours easing childcare pressure.
- Supporting the digital literacy of workers which enables working-from-home capabilities
- Creative job share roles; allowing more flexibility in how roles are structured

Resources should be provided for employers to be innovative in how they approach flexible working practices. Further, greater awareness for employers of the benefits of embracing flexible working practices should also be made by the state government.

### 2.2. Given the scope of the Population Strategy, what is critical for all levels of government to do a) attract and retain families and b) support those looking to start a family, to create a life in Tasmania?

Each of the following is considered critical for the Break O'Day region to provide in order to attract and retain families including those wishing to start a family in the region.

#### Housing Affordability

As discussed in section 1.1, housing affordability is critical for all levels of government to address. Issues particular to the Break O'Day region are:

- Provision of substandard housing within the private rental market taking advantage of a lack of rental housing.

- Lack of social and affordable housing across the municipality by the State Government.
- Temporary measures are now becoming permanent (families living with their parents, in caravans/sheds etc)
- Young families struggling to get into the housing market; forcing substandard housing to become acceptable.
- Families moving to regional centres (Hobart and Launceston) as a result of lack of housing within Break O'Day. Not only does this further exacerbate a lack of housing options in Hobart and Launceston but it takes away skilled and young workers from regions that benefit from their social, economic and cultural input.
- Explore the disparity between the offerings of financial loans for prospective home owners looking to buy in regional vs urban areas. The finance sector has limited potential buyers the opportunity of ownership within the municipality due to its isolated location.

#### **Greater legislative jurisdiction relating to home businesses**

- Explore legislative reform that enables the Council's to apply commercial rates and charges to properties that accommodate commercial operations, particularly when those properties are no longer available to residents and workers in communities where housing availability and affordability are of concern. Such reform would allow Council's to impose place-based and relatively swift responses that may improve liveability within the area. They are also required to be reviewed which ensures that they maintain relevancy.

#### **Education: Access and Quality**

- Ensuring that access and quality of education, across all levels, are maintained and improved.
- The network of families' has been greater in previous years; however, with the influx of new people moving into the area means they are less likely to have a family network that offer alternatives to child care. The state government needs to consider how they can remove the pain point of isolation and remedy childcare facility inaccessibility.
- Disability (also relates to allied services): when children need additional support, parents may result in moving away or travelling long distances which has a socio-economic and quality of life impact.
- Diverse backgrounds – ensuring services are offered to support children in school settings. This includes support for both children and teachers.

#### **Employment Aspirations and availability**

- Ensuring Tasmania offers workers the pathways to achieve, and aspire for, positively challenging and rewarding employment.

#### **Accessibility to allied services**

- As addressed in section 1.1.

### Section 3: Align emerging employment opportunities, changing workforce needs and overseas and interstate migration

#### 3.1. When we consider the next generation of 15 to 18 year old Tasmanians, what is needed to help support them to thrive and choose to live in their home state?

As discussed in section 2.2. – As Tasmania continues to encourage migrant families, we must ensure that there are service provisions that support their children in school (and social) settings.

#### 3.2. What can be done to attract and retain more 18 to 44 year olds from interstate and overseas to address labour and/or skills shortages over the next five to 30 years?

Visas – continued support for, and promotion of, working flexibility. Particularly relevant for people outside of 18 to 44-year-old age bracket.

#### 3.3. What is needed to support successful settlement for skilled migrants and newly arrived community members in different parts of Tasmania?

##### Localised support services

A common issue found in regional/isolated areas is outreach programs based in Hobart or Launceston which do not provide place-based and local support services to skilled migrants and newly arrived community members. Monthly visits (or less) may not be adequate in providing the support that is required for newly arrived members. This is particularly relevant for isolated areas like BOD, which already experience separation from more urban areas.

Consideration should also be given to the following:

- How much capacity do local schools have in supporting local students' relocation to the community? For example, language barriers and cultural awareness.

### Section 4: Manage a structurally ageing population

#### 4.1. What are the most significant innovation opportunities you see which have the potential to improve (one or all of) health, food security, ageing in place, and aged care?

See 1.2 and 4.3

#### 4.2. How might we redesign mechanisms and services for smaller scale and declining communities to increase wellbeing outcomes?

#### 4.3. Do you see potential to redesign current initiatives or use existing facilities in a new way to engage intergenerational participation? Please outline ideas that could be scaled up for broad application.

Separation of public infrastructure such as child care facilities/aged-care facilities/libraries should be reviewed - how can we look at collaboration and shared resources as a benefit in these spaces?



### General Comments

- Cultural heritage is not really mentioned or recognised in the paper, this has the potential for impacts on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural sites.
- The 2021 State of the Environment report (SoE 2021) provides an evidence-based assessment of the state of Australia's environment. Overall, the state and trend of the environment of Australia are poor and deteriorating because of increasing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, and resource extraction. Multiple pressures create cumulative impacts that amplify threats to our environment, and abrupt changes in ecological systems have been recorded in the past 5 years. How is the impact of a much-increased Tasmanian population being measured against the impacts on the natural heritage?