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Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council  
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Dear Council

### **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECOVERY ON THE WEST COAST**

The West Coast Council looks forward to working with the Council and the State Government to support the economic and social recovery of the State. We are a region that has had more experience than most with economic and social trials and welcome the opportunity to provide our support to recovery from the current pandemic.

As the Council considers its plans for recovery, we ask that you consider regional and remote areas in two ways. The first is the potential of regions like that West Coast.

The West Coast is a vital part of the Tasmanian economy, it is the base for an outsized proportion of Tasmania's exports, GSP and state government revenue. All with only a relatively small proportion of government funded infrastructure and services. With a little, we do a lot. The West Coast has an abundance of potential in mining, aquaculture, renewable energy, and tourism, but it is held back by a short-term view adopted by many, and insufficient attention being paid to infrastructure maintenance and services.

There is a culture of drive-in and drive-out work, or short-term residences, which limits investment in housing and the community. This in turn reduces the ability of our region to be productive. Changing this short-term view of resource rich regions would have large benefits for the productivity of the State by increasing the ability of businesses in our region to commence operations or grow. To do this we need support: to ensure more downstream and upstream processing in our region, to build up housing and community infrastructure, to encourage people to live and work in our communities and to develop projects which will not just provide resources and employments to other regions, but that will support our region long-term.

The West Coast is a difficult place to build and maintain infrastructure. As a small Council, with a relatively disadvantaged resident base, we face the same revenue problems as many others. This leads to difficulties for us in providing all the community infrastructure that small remote communities need. Often, we have to provide infrastructure or services that in other places is provided by the private sector, or State Government, all off a smaller revenue base (per capita) than larger Councils.

Additionally, as a remote area, services and maintenance is often out of sight, out of mind. Many roads are in a condition that would not be accepted in other parts of the State, but, maintenance, is delayed, often to periods outside of our short season for road construction, leading to road failures and wastage. We are often, just not the priority, but with the shortest construction season, and one of the highest percentages of heavy vehicles and tourist traffic, we should be. This could be solved by ensuring works to be conducted on the West Coast (and other high rainfall/winter susceptible areas) are prioritised in the construction window, not left as an afterthought. It would also be helped by maintenance budgets and contracts that recognise the impact of heavy vehicles and high rain fall on roads.

If the West Coast is supported, it will continue to provide economic support for the State.

The second is many people, including those involved in economic development, infrastructure management, or service delivery do not understand our region and therefore their attempts at support, although well intentioned can miss the mark. This is a common experience across regional and remote communities. It leads to problems such as works being conducted at the wrong time as discussed above, or services being provided to the community in an unsustainable way. It is vitally important that any efforts at recovery consider and consult with local communities. If this consultation is not conducted and recovery efforts not tailored for remote and regional areas, then those efforts will not work. An important example is that many services are provided on a regional basis. For the West Coast this often means the service is based in Devonport or Burnie by a provider whose contract states that they must also service the West Coast community from that base. We know that this does not work, it does not result in any increased service for our community. Recently we conducted a review of services related to Aged Care in partnership with KPMG, that identified in many of these cases those providing services on contracts such as that, had never been to the West Coast and that the local community did not know they existed or could provide a service. This is not fair and leads to poor social and economic outcomes. Social and economic recovery will only work if remote and regional communities are not just a line in a contract or a policy, there must be a concerted effort to ensure services actually reach our communities. We understand that this is difficult, and sometimes it is expensive, but a way must be found, or efforts and social and economic recovery will fail our community.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our community with you further and can provide suggestions for, or comments on, specific projects if requested.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Vickers', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Phil Vickers  
**MAYOR**

*CC Jeremy Rockcliff, Joan Rylah, Roger Jaensch*