

## **Draft minutes of the Local Government Transport Advisory Panel's Special Local Roads Program Governance Review Workshop**

*held on Friday 17 December 2021 at 2:30pm in the Eyre Peninsula Room at Local Government House, 148 Frome Street, Adelaide and on MS Teams*

### **1. Present / Apologies**

#### **Panel Members:**

Mayor Keith Parkes (Alexandrina Council) – member of the LGA Board\*

Richard Dodson (Light Regional Council) – member from a country Council\*

Peter Tsokas (City of Unley) – member from a metropolitan Council\*

Peter Ilee (South Australian Local Government Grants Commission, Attorney General's Department) – nominee of the Minister for Planning and Local Government\*

Mike Wilde, proxy for Andrew Excell (Department for Infrastructure and Transport) – nominee of the Minister for Transport\*

Lea Bacon (LGA) – delegate of the Local Government Association

#### **LGA Secretariat:**

Michael Arnam, Director Strategy LGA.

#### **Apologies:**

Andrew Excell (Department for Infrastructure and Transport) – nominee of the Minister for Transport

Patricia Coonan, (Think Purple) Special Local Roads Program Coordinator, LGA consultant

\*indicates attendance via MS Teams

### **2. LGTAP discussion**

Mayor Parks opened the workshop and invited Lea Bacon to lead the discussion to facilitate LGTAP feedback on the draft SLRP Future Directions Discussion Paper.

Lea provided background information explaining that the LGA Board requested the Discussion Paper be prepared in response to the complaint from Yorke Peninsula Council and the inability to finalise and adopt the recommendations from the Hudson Howells review.

Key points of conversation from LGTAP members included that:

- LGTAP's discussion around improving SLRP processes started over two years ago, and appears to be drifting away from process improvements and towards more substantive change
- Draft Discussion Paper has a broad focus, and insufficiently addresses the original process improvements that LGTAP was seeking to address in the governance review
- Key process improvements that LGTAP are looking for include:
  - Better managing underspend on projects
  - Standardised application forms
  - Being clear about the definition of the key SLRP criteria – and the evidence required from councils to evaluate against these criteria

- Supporting councils to ensure their projects are properly planned/estimated, and managed
  - Improved LGTAP documentation, eg more detailed minutes and making these publicly accessible
  - Providing LGTAP members with papers well in advance of meetings
  - Complaint handling mechanism
  - Explore opportunity for LGTAP members to become more familiar with roads
  - Consider pros/cons of having applicants present to LGTAP
  - Guidance around management of multi-year (or potentially multi year) applications
- A broader question worth contemplating is what the cost of running the program is for all involved, eg councils, LGTAP, LGA, State Government. General sense from committee that benefits > costs.
  - Core intent of SLRP remains in funding local roads of regional significance. The criteria are right, so our focus should be on improving processes, and not eroding the principles.
  - There is a need to improve councils' understanding of the SLRP's purpose, and how the application and assessment processes are run.
  - LGTAP shouldn't shy away from upholding the core purpose of the SLRP, and clearer and stronger process should help to manage expectations from councils.
  - To the question of Regional LGA's charging a fee on successful projects to fund their regional plans, this is a matter between RLGAs and councils, and not a concern to LGTAP.
  - To the question of the costs to the LGA in administering the SLRP and LGTAP:
    - Noted that this comes at a real cost and needs to be addressed
    - The current arrangement of the LGA secretariat managing this from 'side of the desk' is not working
    - The ideal scenario would be to employ a SLRP Program Manager/Coordinator who can fulfill the administrative/grant management functions as well as work with councils beforehand to improve application quality and support successful applicants during delivery.
    - Acknowledged funding this is an issue that requires further analysis and consideration.
  - On the 2022/23 round, timelines with the Federal Minister mean that it will be possible to postpone, so some process improvements will need to be implemented in early 2022.

### 3. Next steps

The LGA secretariat will update the draft Discussion Paper, to be recommended to the LGA Board of Directors at its meeting of 20 January 2022, to focus on the desired process improvements for the SLRP, with the aim of implementing these ready for the 2022-23 round due to open in March 2022. This is likely to comprise:

- Updated Terms of Reference for LGTAP
- Updated SLRP Policies and Guidelines
- Full implementation of the transition to the Smarty Grants online grant management platform; and
- Clear communication to the LG sector, including establishment of a publicly accessible LGTAP website with accessible, clear and relevant information.

The LGA Secretariat will continue to liaise with, consult and seek guidance from LGTAP with a meeting anticipated in late January / early February 2022.