



9 April 2021

Mr Linus Power MP  
Chair  
Economics and Governance Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: [egc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:egc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Power

### **Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021**

Thank you for your correspondence seeking submissions to the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 (the Bill).

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit associated entity established solely to service councils and the needs of local communities. The LGAQ represents all 77 local governments in Queensland.

We note the Bill amends several acts and regulations, but specifically for local government we note that consequential amendments have been made to the *City of Brisbane Regulation 2012* and the *Local Government Regulation 2012* to apply the repealed *Queensland Productivity Commission Act* to the investigation of competitive neutrality complaints relating to local government, including complaints relating to the council or a council's corporatised business entity.

We also note the Bill mandates that legislation which requires or authorises print advertising or publication by government agencies shall be satisfied by digital/electronic advertising or publication, subject to appropriate exemptions. This provision aims to reduce costs and red tape to further implement the Government's Savings and Debt Plan, and to modernise requirements to publish government information. The LGAQ is seeking an extension to this provision that would also incorporate local government advertising requirements.

#### Amendment sought

At the LGAQ's 2020 Annual Conference in October 2020, Queensland's 77 council's endorsed a resolution calling on the State Government to review the requirements imposed on local governments regarding the publishing of notices in newspapers and consider alternatives, including publishing notices online.

With the demise of the physical distribution of newspapers in many regions it is now necessary for councils to advertise certain actions or activities elsewhere.

For example, tenders and land acquisitions are required to be advertised in a newspaper which is physically circulating daily within the area. For many Queensland communities, the migration of local print papers to online formats has resulted in no local newspapers being physically



circulated daily. Consequently, councils have been compelled to use the services of larger, statewide newspapers that do not have the same penetration within their community. Indeed, these papers are also reducing their physical circulation footprint in many regional areas.

It is suggested legislation be amended to allow advertising to occur in online newspapers, provided they are circulating daily (or near to daily) within the relevant local government area. It maintains relevance to the regional areas, retains expenditure within the regions (rather than bleeding advertising expenses to Brisbane) and assists with promoting local content. Legal advice obtained by the LGAQ indicates the Acts Interpretation Act would be the appropriate amendment vehicle to achieve such a change.

Greater use of social media and other forms of digital communications could also be a more cost effective, modern and user-friendly method for councils to communicate these notices to their local communities. To be clear, local governments are not advocating to remove current processes of transparency or community notification, however the statute books need to keep pace with the current media market and modern forms of communication.

The LGAQ would be happy to address your Committee at a public hearing and speak further to this submission. For any further information, you can contact LGAQ Head of Advocacy Alison Smith on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Greg Hallam', written over a light grey circular stamp or watermark.

Greg Hallam AM  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER