

PREMIER, LARA GIDDINGS MP

TASMANIA TOGETHER PROGRESS BOARD REPEAL BILL 2012

SECOND READING SPEECH

I move – That the Bill now be read for the second time.

*The Tasmania Together Progress Board Repeal Bill 2012* repeals the *Tasmania Together Progress Board Act 2001*.

Mr Speaker, it is necessary to repeal the Act in order to disband the Tasmania Together Progress Board.

The Government has made the decision to disband the Board and for the Board's resources to be redirected to supporting the Government's key priorities in data collection, performance reporting and community consultation and engagement.

Over the past 11 years Tasmania Together has laid a solid foundation in data collection and performance reporting, as well as in community engagement.

I now want to build on what we have learned through Tasmania Together so that we can deliver real, practical outcomes in communities.

To that end, the Government has decided to disband the Progress Board and redirect the resources currently supporting the Board towards our priorities of improving our data collection and performance reporting and building our expertise in community engagement.

Mr Speaker, in my State of the State address to Parliament in March this year, I announced my Stronger Communities Agenda and spoke of the need to dedicate the energy and expertise of government to delivering practical solutions to local communities.

I cited our Child and Family Centres and Learning and Information Network Centres as great examples of what can be achieved when government agencies work together with communities.

Access to quality data and understanding the needs of our communities are the building blocks for effective decision-making by governments.

Data that is relevant, robust and reliable is at the heart of informed decision-making by government, business and communities alike.

Equally, effective consultation and engagement with communities is vital to ensuring that policy and services are tailored to suit local needs.

More and more, the benefits of decision-making that is informed by data and tailored to local needs is being recognised.

I have been particularly impressed by the success of models such as Local Enabling Groups, which are empowering communities to have a say in the design and delivery of Child and Family Centres being developed around the State, using the information and data collected by government agencies.

I have also spoken about the need to improve the Government's statistical assets and data and its approach to engaging effectively with local communities.

I am pleased to advise that substantial activity is already occurring across government to progress priorities, particularly through initiatives such as the 'Stats Matter' project and the development of a whole-of-government community engagement framework.

'Stats Matter' is a joint initiative of the Tasmanian Government and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, that aims to improve the production, coordination and management of data across government and ensure that the strategic and enabling capacity of data collected by agencies is maximised.

The Tasmanian community will ultimately benefit from this project through enhanced planning, evidence-based policy approaches, improved targeting of service delivery and increased transparency and accountability of government agencies.

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in collecting and reporting on social and economic data. In particular, the performance reporting environment has changed significantly with the advent of the new Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial

Relations and its extensive performance reporting framework.

Under the new national regime, Tasmania now reports publicly to the COAG Reform Council against multiple national indicators that measure our performance in delivering key community programs under the various national agreements and national partnerships to which Commonwealth funding is attached. It also reports annually against the Report on Government Services and through sites such as 'My School' and agency report cards such as those released by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.

As I have indicated, the Government is getting better at integrating services and tailoring them to local community needs. We want to see more government services run this way and encourage government agencies to consult effectively with communities to achieve these outcomes.

In order to assist government agencies with these endeavours we are currently developing a Tasmanian Government Framework for Community Engagement,

which recognises that the involvement of communities in decision-making is crucial to the quality of policy and success in service delivery.

This framework will build on and extend the community consultation work undertaken by Tasmania Together over the last 11 years.

Mr Speaker, at the time it was established Tasmania Together was world-leading in the areas of performance reporting and community engagement.

As I have indicated, the public performance reporting environment for Government has become far more transparent in recent years and there are different expectations as to the involvement of individuals and communities in the decisions and services that that directly affect them.

We must respond to those changes by refocusing the way we develop policy and deliver services.

Mr Speaker, over the past 11 years Tasmania Together has served the community well and I am proud of its achievements.

However, in a budget constrained environment, it is imperative that resources are directed to where they will deliver optimum gains for the community.

That is why the Government has decided that it is no longer possible to properly resource the Tasmania Together project whilst also providing the necessary support for the Government's emerging priorities in strategic data management and reporting and community engagement, including work under the 'Stats Matter' project.

Disbanding the Tasmania Together Progress Board will enable the expertise, resources and systems currently within the Tasmania Together Secretariat to be integrated into the Department of Premier and Cabinet in order to support the Government's emerging priorities.

The Unit will also continue to report progress against those Tasmania Together benchmarks which align with government priorities and support contemporary evidence-based policy making.

These benchmarks will be determined following a review.

Mr Speaker, disbanding the Board will yield an annual budget saving of approximately \$200 000, while ensuring that the integrity of those Tasmania Together benchmarks that support the Government's policy priorities are maintained.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the work of all Tasmania Together Progress Board members, past and present, who have demonstrated passion and commitment in implementing the original vision of our former Premier, the late Jim Bacon.

There is much to be proud of as we take that work forward.

I commend the Bill to the House.