

# Chamber Policy & Advocacy News - March 2017



Welcome to our new advocacy newsletter. Every month, we'll give you an update on the advocacy initiatives we've been involved in on your behalf.

The Launceston Chamber of Commerce aims to make a valued contribution to the attractiveness of the Launceston region as a place to live, work, play and invest. We provide influential representation and strong leadership, and smart solutions that encourage the success of businesses in the Launceston region.

We were kept very busy during February representing members' interests across many issues. If you have any questions, or would like to share your thoughts, give us a call.

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## **Proposed changes to boundaries for Legislative Council electorates**

We made a submission to the review of Legislative Council division boundaries strongly rejecting the need for radical changes.

No credible argument has been presented as to why incremental boundary changes would not

deliver an outcome that addresses the small variations in populations within the existing division boundaries.

The discussion paper notes that the Redistribution Panel considered and rejected an option to develop boundaries with the minimal adjustments required to comply with the legislated criteria. This is our preferred option.

In the absence of compelling evidence, it is clear that there is no need for significant change at this time to address concerns about population differentials. There can be no justification for the radical and disruptive solution proposed.

See our submission here (need to upload submission to website); and Talking Point [here](#).



### **Time for talk is over – we must fix Tasmania’s water and sewage problems**

The Chamber says the time for buck-passing and bureaucratic squabbling has long past.

This situation is no longer tolerable. The very basics of public health are clean water and sanitation. These results would be considered unacceptable in a third world country. We have the right to expect in a developed country, anywhere in Australia, that we have access to clean water and proper sewage treatment.



It is clear that we need a whole-of-government approach to ensure all Tasmanians have access to clean and safe drinking water, and that our wastewater systems comply with accepted environmental standards. Importantly, repeated testing and expert reports have confirmed that Launceston needs to be the top priority for governments at all levels.

Listen to our Chamber President speaking on this issue [here](#).

### **State-wide planning scheme welcomed**

We welcomed the announcement of the introduction of a single state-wide planning scheme. However, while we recognise that this process has been a difficult and complex one, there is still much to be done to achieve the desired outcome.



The situation where planning requirements varied

so greatly across the state's twenty-nine local government areas imposed significant challenges and costs for business. Anything that provides greater certainty will result in increased business confidence and encourage investment.

The state government promised at the last election to provide 'a fairer, faster, cheaper and simpler planning system' for Tasmania. This announcement certainly goes a long way to delivering on that commitment. However, as with all new legislation, the devil will be in the detail.

### **Penalty rates decision should be part of a broader community conversation**

In its four-yearly review of modern awards, the full bench of the Fair Work Commission last week announced its decision to reduce Sunday and public holiday penalty rates in hospitality, retail, and pharmacy sectors.

This decision reflects the fact that we live in a globalised 24/7 world, where the weekend is now part of the normal working week. If we want to be competitive, then we must accept that there can be no standardised working hours.

It will result in increased employment opportunities for many workers in the retail, hospitality and tourism, and pharmacy sectors.

However, this should be just the start of a wider community discussion. There is much more to be considered if we're to address the long-term structural disadvantages evident in regional areas with high unemployment – and there is a need to think outside the box.

### **Ombudsman's report finds bank lending practices cause significant harm to small business**

The Chamber welcomed the recommendations of the report of the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman small business ombudsman's inquiry into bank lending to the small and medium business sector.

The Ombudsman found that banks consistently engage in practices that can – and do – cause significant harm to small and medium business enterprises. The report makes a number of recommendations, including that banks should be prevented from defaulting loans when a small



business has acted lawfully and they should provide standard form contracts and clear summaries of default loan triggers.

### **Defence Innovation and Design Precinct will be a game changer for northern Tasmania**

Over the next fifty years, the federal government will be investing more than \$90 billion in new state-of-the-art submarines and surface vessels for the Australian Defence Forces. This extensive program will be highly dependent on high level skills in research design, engineering, testing - even before the construction phase.

Already, the federal government has announced that, because of its experience in ship-building, significant elements of the construction spend will be undertaken in Adelaide. There is mounting support for proposal arguing that a Defence Innovation and Design Precinct building on northern Tasmania's strengths in defence and maritime research and innovation could deliver many of the other elements on which these programs will be dependent.

Chamber Executive Officer, Jan Davis, explains what this might look like [here](#).



### **People in Launceston deserve a 'fair go' for fuel**

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission report into the Launceston petrol market released last year found that Launceston motorists paid on average around 12 cents per litre more for petrol than motorists in the five largest cities. It concluded that, if the Launceston market were more competitive, motorists could expect on-going savings of 4-5 cents per litre.

The ACCC report belled the cat - and showed that all the arguments about why fuel prices are higher in Launceston are not based in fact. The real reason is that retail margins are higher than elsewhere. This imposes unfair cost burdens on everyone. These costs can be substantial for businesses operating in very competitive markets in an already difficult environment.

Business activity is the key driver of the Tasmanian economy, and any additional costs impact on viability. Despite the evidence provided in the ACCC report, no action has been taken to address this serious issue. There's been

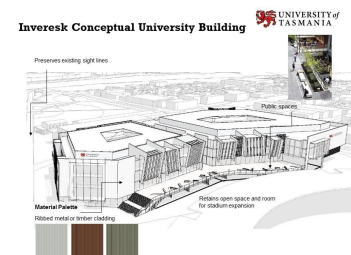


enough talk: the Chamber believes that regulators must step in to address this market failure and to ensure fuel costs in Launceston are more reasonably aligned with those on the mainland.

### **UTAS Transformation Project**

This exciting project is starting to take shape, and the Chamber is involved in a range of discussions ahead of public announcements being made.

Watch this space: we'll soon be sharing more information about the project – and about how local businesses can be involved.



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Office: 6331 9364, Address: 1/29 Paterson Street, Launceston, Tas 7250

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