

Towards improved local government in southern Tasmania - Community Feedback on Options

26th September 2011 to 3rd October 2011

Please note

- This document contains the emails that have been sent to the Independent Panel.
- The emails have been edited to delete the names or other text that may identify the individual that has sent the email.
- All edits, other than the deletion of names, are marked by “xxxxxxx”.
- All emails have been formatted into a common font.

178

I have looked at the proposals for amalgamating the southern councils and I am generally in favour of a combination of options 3 and 4.

I believe that joining like with like makes more sense. Combine the urban and suburban greater Hobart areas into one council, removing the rural areas of Clarence and combining them with Sorell and Tasman. Bruny Island, rural Kingborough and Huon Valley form a community with similar interests and should be one council.

I feel that Glamorgan Spring Bay should be part of a greater East Coast council, joining with the coastal areas of Break O'Day to form a community of similar interest.

Derwent Valley and Central Highlands belong together and Southern Midlands belong in a combination of like interest with parts of Northern Midlands focussed on the rural areas centred on the Midland Highway.

I believe that these suggestions would create areas of community that are more aligned than options 3 and 4.

Cheers,

New Town Tas

179

I live in Sandy Bay and strongly support local government reform to improve management capability (at both an officer and elected representative level) and efficiency, to deliver improved services to rate payers. Having studied the 4 options presented, I'm not sure that any of the options best reflect my views, which have been formed in part by my recent experience in working directly with local government. I see value in a greater Hobart city council, particularly to line up better with the capital city and also in terms of provision of recreational facilities, where residents are generally no more than a 15 minute drive from the major facilities. However, this option (no. 3) leaves the smallest, least resourced councils (in particular Central Highlands, Glamorgan Spring-Bay and Tasman) as stand alone entities. This does not make much sense - these smaller councils are most in need of greater support/expertise and I would suggest that elements of Option 4 relating to combining the smaller rural/semi rural councils should prevail.

Congratulations on showing leadership and engaging with the community on this matter. Reform is long overdue and let's hope this example is replicated in the north and north-west.

Kind regards

180

To: the Independent Panel

The Council of Hobart Community Associations feels that the small number of responses received by the Independent panel may reflect a need for greater publicity and coverage of the issue of Council amalgamations. One comment from one of our member organisations might best explain the problem: "None of those on our Committee knew that the call for input had occurred until ... your email came yesterday. If we did not know, we doubt if many other ratepayers did either."

The general public has not been engaged in the process, and it is feared that vested interests may have a disproportionate say in the outcomes.

CHCA believes that the community should be driving the process, and that those who fund local government (the ratepaying base) should decide how the business of local government is run.

While it is appreciated that the Independent Panel has put forward four options and has asked for comment regarding them, CHCA does not believe that it is sufficient for you to take the line that "We asked you; its up to you to come forward and comment." The lamentable position that we are now in is expressed in this comment, received from a member: "Most people, particularly women, are too busy to care; they are holding down three jobs. Most people are not working 40 hour weeks any more . It is ridiculous."

Most people are intimidated by the process, and the status of experts. Sadly, another member noted: "One reason for the low response rate could be that ratepayers are used to being ignored on local government matters; they feel their responses won't be heard anyway and the process may not be open and transparent." Residents feel that they are not in a position to challenge the expert view. The pros and cons of each option need to be explained, perhaps at community forums. There needs to be more public engagement.

CHCA suggests that polling or other survey technology should be employed to determine the public's preferences. A professional organisation, such as Deloitte or Access Economics could be engaged to inform the community, and then collate the response and report the outcome of full community consultation.

CHCA is concerned that a cursory approach to amalgamations could lead to a loss of participation by citizens. Though we support local government rationalisation and consider the need urgent, certain principles must be inviolate in any moves to reduce the number of representatives at local government level. Principles that must be upheld will be those that ensure consultation, participation, and access are improved as part of the process.

Small communities should not be 'swallowed up' by larger communities. All residents should have an equal level of access and representation. A transparent accountability process would also need to be implemented. There is a danger of wasting public money on top-heavy administration, a situation we have seen too often, most recently in the establishment of Water & Sewerage Boards.

The Council of Hobart Community Associations makes no submission on the actual options. Individual members and associations will do that on their own behalf. This comment seeks to ensure the process is not only open and transparent, but is effective in engaging the community.

Yours Faithfully

181

Dear Panel,

I am a resident in the Clarence City Council. Clarence has a low rating, minimal debt, and is currently a thriving Council with urban growth and developments in the hundreds of millions of dollars. So naturally I am hesitant with any change that will involve amalgamating with other Councils in Hobart that would never have allowed this sort of development under greater Hobart Council.

With that background I offer my thoughts:

Public opinion can only be decided by polling every resident. It is insufficient to rely solely on submissions received to gauge the views of the wider community. Any amalgamation should be driven by the respective councils themselves, not the STCA, the state government or

any other outside body. I also understand that some Councils are disappointed at the way this has been communicated, namely by the Media and not back through Council channels. The STCA , Property Council and others have an agenda that I do not believe Marries with the majority of residents, and this is more than mere efficiencies through amalgamation.

My thoughts on the options:

OPTION 1

This is NOT the status quo! This is very misleading. This model sounds like one step closer to removal of local government by suggesting the option for the state government to gain control over all 12 councils. Mayors powers reduce, elected Councillors capacity to effect change reduce. This is a deceptive submission and incorrect presentation of what many would consider to be the 'status quo'. I do not support this option.

OPTION 2

I vehemently oppose this model. This will destroy 'local' representation as we have known it and any benefits do not outweigh the costs of what is lost. Given that the average Council size in Australia is between 40,000-60,000 I see no reason why this needs to be considered, and it does not take into account the cultural, social and heritage values of Tasmanians in regard to local government.

OPTION 3

Per my initial preamble, I oppose merging perfectly well run Councils (e.g. Clarence) with councils that are debt laden (HCC/Glenorchy). This is a great option for residents in Hobart and Glenorchy City Councils, but not for those in the self sufficient and efficient Councils. In addition, there is a strong focus in the Hobart and Glenorchy Councils of strengthening the CBD areas – and they would not support (and have not) many of the wonderful developments that are most suited to an area such as Clarence including the Korean Development (\$300m Development), Cambridge Park and the DFO near Hobart Airport (\$100m Development).

This option also reduces representation (especially given voting is not compulsory – which it should be) as the more organised political parties, such as the Green party and Labour party, will flood elections with endorsed candidates. At the moment Clarence is able to minimise the amount of seats these parties have given the boundaries of the City and electoral preference. We (Clarence) have no need for such a Council and a Council of this Size is certainly not the norm Australia wide as I feel it is presented. I particularly note the council sizes in Western Australia and consider its booming economy.

OPTION 4

This is the only viable option presented that has any chance of full community support across the southern region. I support the idea of an Eastern Shore Council – but only so far as the respective Councils agree to such amalgamation. I am opposed to any external body or the Government from forcing amalgamations – especially when it is against the will of the majority of Clarence Residents

which I suspect is the case, although your surveys have not effectively reported on their results by Council in relation to merging of their own Council or the idea of merging small, inefficient and unsustainable Councils.

I also wish to include one further Option that should be tabled – Do Nothing! This is different from your option 1 presented.

The reality is most people agree that local government in Tasmania is not sustainable under its current model. I agree with this and I believe that Councils that rely heavily (in some cases over 50% of their income) on grants should be amalgamated with larger councils. Should they not wish to, a simply solution is to stop the grant funding and they will be forced to because there is no business case for their existence and they will no be able to survive and communities will seek amalgamation.

However, any Council amalgamation should be driven bottom up; with incentives from the top down such as handing back water and sewerage to the Councils should they elect to amalgamate. I believe that a Council such as Clarence has no immediate need to be involved in any amalgamations, and should these be perused again (they have previously been explored and driven by the councils themselves) it should be up to the respective Councils as to who they decided to join. It is for this reason option 4 is the only option you have put forward that I believe should be recommended to councils for their consideration.

I share these views as my own, but also after over a month of talking with a number (Approx 200) of residents from across the City of Clarence who have generally expressed views along these lines.

Thanks.

Kind regards,

27 September 2011

The Panel
Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority
GPO Box 503
HOBART 7001

Dear Panel

Submission - Council Reform

The Tasmanian Automobile Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of the retail automotive industry in Tasmania. There are approximately 1,200 automotive related businesses in the state ranging from new and used vehicle dealerships through service stations, mechanical and body repairers and ending in the auto recycler's yard. The vast majority of these businesses employ less than 5 staff, many employ no staff.

Generally, every automotive business operates from a commercial property and they are also residential rate payers.

The costs associated with the various levels of government and compliance with a myriad of regulations makes it increasingly difficult for business, particularly small business, to thrive.

In a small state like Tasmania, in size and population, it is incredulous to think we support 29 councils and 281 aldermen and in the south 12 councils.

Research prepared for the Property Council of Australia indicating council reform could generate savings of up to 35% or \$110 million in the south of the State is a persuasive argument for change.

While the STCA review has developed 4 options we feel there are only two immediate considerations;

1. Council Reform or
2. No Council Reform

Any other consideration will only serve to confuse the issue and divide the community who maybe in favour of change but divided on the form it may take, as happened with the Australian Republic Referendum.



TACC's position is in favour of Council Reform and once the community agrees to that principle we would be happy to offer our views on the STCA options 2, 3 or 4.

Change is very difficult for individuals, business and government, but change also brings opportunities to do things better. In this case to better serve the community and reduce the financial burden on rate payers.

We can't afford to let parochial attitudes and vested interests hamper this opportunity for change.

The southern councils should be commended for recognising the ground swell of rate payer discontent, of council service delivery and the increasing cost burden, and the commencing of this review.

Yours faithfully



Malcolm Little
General Manager

183

Dear Panel members

A copy of your options papers was sent to me last week with the Bothwell Historical Society on the second line. As the BHS does not have another meeting for some weeks and you want submissions by the end of next week I am replying PERSONALLY with no reference to the above society as I have spent some hours thinking about your paper. There is also considerable comment about the proposals in our small town of Bothwell (proportionally a vast amount of interest cf. with interest evinced in major population areas) and my husband had opinions on your paper over breakfast.

Most country people want to have some local say in local government. There is no provision for effective town committees in the current Act. If there were some way for town committees to have influence on the council, plus a ward system for election of councillors I think people would be quite happy with a large merger (something like federation!).

Your option 4 may sound OK but ask anyone here if they want to merge with Derwent Valley and you get a resounding 'no' based on knowledge of the lack of initiative and financial ability shown by that council. Mind you, there was strong resistance to combining with Hamilton some years ago. Bothwell people are not geographically aligned to that area. We are much more aligned to Oatlands where some Bothwell people use the medical facilities. We also travel to Hobart through parts of Southern Midlands. Envy is shown by those who have observed the fact for the amount of staff employed by Southern Midlands who are funded by various grants.

I have grave doubts about any saving of tax payers' money in amalgamations and I do not think you can sell the idea using that as an inducement. This certainly does not appear to have happened in the last mergers nor in the case of the formation of Southern Water. More services and an influx of Commonwealth funds might be a bigger inducement.

Personally I would like to see Bothwell as part of a council area that could afford a full or part-time heritage officer which is something sadly lacking in this historic town.

I don't think you have got any of the options quite right. With the very strong proviso that there was provision for local Bothwell people to have some say and influence in the council I would be happy with option 2.

Bothwell

Good morning,

We are pleased that the STCA has adopted a realistic approach to Local Government and identified that the current structure is unsustainable.

In terms of the options listed, we are in favour of Option Two - a single Southern Tasmanian Council, and Option Three – Greater Hobart as a fallback option, and offer the below comments on each option. We also declare at this point that one of us is employed by one of the 12 Councils in Southern Tasmania.

Option One – this option is illusory, as it appears to offer change through the establishment of the holding entity to undertake most of the functions currently performed by each Council, but the existing problems remain – parochialism, with the 12 Councils competing with each other instead of working constructively with each other in a complementary fashion. It is self-defeating for neighbouring Councils to try and poach businesses or investment from each other when several Councils for example have no vacant industrial land for greenfields developments, and to see each other as competitors for visitors to Hobart. The problem of too many Councils and elected representatives would remain and the elected representatives of each Council would continue to see other Councils as competitors.

Option Two – this is clearly the preferred option. Having only one Council would see significant savings through removing the ridiculous situation of having 12 of everything, and the economies of scale would be enormous through the greater volume of items purchased. In terms of representation, a Ward system would probably necessary, however we do not agree that localised community committees would be required, as this would essentially become another layer of Government and pork-barrelling may result. There is also a concern that a Council of this size may become politicised with both major political parties seeking to neutralise the influence of the Council would have at both Tasmanian and national level. This aside, the substantial reduction of the problems in the current Local Government structure make this the preferred option. Brisbane City Council is held up as the standard bearer for Local Government in Australia, and as a former resident, I cannot speak highly enough of it as an organisation, and even at its size, still manages to deliver excellent localised programs, so the fears of community based programs being lost are totally unfounded.

Option Three – While not our preferred option, the ides of a Greater Hobart Council has some merit. There will be economies of scale for Greater Hobart, but not to any great extent for the rural Councils who would still have small rate bases and may need to leverage off

Greater Hobart to get sufficient value for money. As with Option Two, there is still a minor concern that the Greater Hobart Council could become politicised and a Ward system would probably be required.

Option Four – Separate Eastern and Western Shore Councils do not make sense. This only perpetuates the cultural divide that the River Derwent seems to create. Both sides of the River are part of Hobart, and the option would continue the ‘competition’ that presently takes place between Councils when all residential or commercial property owners seek is a suitable location to live or conduct business. In the option, the three rural Councils are still too small to operate effectively, and once again would need to leverage off the major Councils. In all options, the concerns about distances from centres of governance are largely unfounded, and the presence of a Ward system would allow for those remote from the centre of governance to access elected representatives. Likewise, the concerns about sense of place do not really make sense, as I do not identify with my Council as ‘place’, but with the township I live in. Yes this reform will result in major cultural change but if the fears of a few vested interests are allowed to prevail, then this will be a major opportunity to achieve something substantial for Southern Tasmania.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to contribute to this process.

Opossum Bay

185

My experience of council mergers in Victoria was not a positive one. I lived in Melbourne for around 35 years. The main impacts of the merger for my family were;

1. A much longer drive to the council offices.
2. A much longer drive to the recycling depot.
3. Less dog friendly regulations which took a long time and much energy to get improved.
4. No improvement in services.
5. An increase in rates.
6. Our previous local council had a surplus which was then distributed among all comers.

So the prospect of mergers in Tasmania is not one I welcome.

If change is unavoidable, I would choose the third option listed by the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority Panel. I cannot see Options 1 or 2 working successfully and Option 4 would not operate to the benefit of my town of Richmond. I grew up in Richmond in the days when it had its own council. Since its merger with Clarence City Council it has at times been without a single representative on council. Richmond's unique colonial village persona has been under threat from a large city focused council. Its natural links to Sorell for shopping and services would be better served if the two were linked and a bus service encouraged which is not currently the case. I feel it is essential that rural communities retain their local identity and local control.

Yours sincerely,

Richmond

186

As a ratepayer of the Clarence Municipality, I would first strongly object to the limited options provided to the community regarding any council amalgamations.

I am of the opinion that your OPTION 1 is a clever but dishonourable way of duping ratepayers, who aren't in favour of amalgamation of any kind, into accepting a model that would operate as a Greater Southern Districts council.

Hang your heads in shame.

I am not in favour of amalgamations where municipalities that have already funded and regularly maintain their infrastructure should then have to support and fund infrastructure within other existing municipalities where the infrastructure is currently deficient or non-existent. This is not fair.

If any mergers do take place, then all existing debt within municipalities must be retired prior to amalgamation and adequate funding for that debt retirement and for development of major infrastructure which is either non-existent or deficient must be provided by either State or Commonwealth government prior to mergers. Any other way would impose unfair burdens on ratepayers that are already finding it difficult funding high annual rates bills.

If mergers are going to happen, regardless, then I feel that OPTION 4 would be the best outcome, out of a bad lot of choices. That is;

Separate Eastern & Western Shores for Hobart & Regional Amalgamations

The creation of new local government areas, reducing 12 Councils to, say, five – Eastern Shore, Western Shore, South Eastern Coast or Tasman, D'Entrecasteaux, Central Lakes.

The Eastern Shore would comprise Clarence, Brighton and the urban part of Sorell.

Lindisfarne Tas 7015

187

Dear Panel Members

Please find below my submission regarding possible Southern Tasmanian Council Amalgamations.

My experience with other council amalgamations has not been positive. I was resident in Melbourne at the time of the council amalgamations initiated by Mr Kennett's government. We were part of a small council that operated with a budget surplus despite not having the supposed advantages of large scale. As a result of that amalgamation we lost nearby local services and had to travel a significantly increased distance in order access the council offices and other services. Other amenities were lost as a result of the amalgamation including, for example, a loss of dog-friendly amenities.

I have had a long association with the town of Richmond and witnessed the changes for the worse that occurred when Richmond went from being the centre of its own municipality to being on the fringe of the city of Clarence. Again, ready access to council offices and other services were lost.

To me local government means that concerned residents are able to have a meaningful impact concerning their local affairs. This has at times proved very difficult for a small locality like Richmond in a populous municipality like Clarence. It would become even more difficult if Richmond were to become part of an even larger municipal area.

Richmond is a special place, having historic and visual features that attract visitors from greater Hobart, all of Tasmania, all of Australia and internationally. The protection of these features has proved difficult in a world where immediate or short-term financial considerations and personal enrichment seem to dominate cultural heritage and wider interests. Treating Richmond as being the same as the rest of Clarence or of a new amalgamated, larger Southern Tasmanian municipality would eventually end up in Richmond losing its special identity and hence its attractiveness to both residents and visitors.

My experience indicates that it is not size but other properties that determine the financial viability and effectiveness of local government. It is my observation that a local sense of community has by far the greatest impact. It is my observation that council amalgamations that have occurred in Tasmania and Victoria have, in a number of locations, managed to diminish that sense of local community whereas in some areas they have flourished in spite of large council indifference.

I would like to see developed a model that puts "local" back into local government.

Another possibility is to generate special status local regions for localities with special attributes, such as Richmond.

Of the options proposed, I believe that while not ideal, Option 3, that would see amalgamation of the Richmond area with Sorell is best. The inclusion of Campania, Colebrook and the rest of the Coal River Valley together with Richmond and Sorell should also be considered.

Richmond
Tasmania

188

I wish to provide some feedback on the options as a resident of Tasman Municipality and a service provider to the whole community.

I notice and work with the struggle that Tasman Council has to adequately support infrastructure let alone develop new infrastructure that assists in growing tourist activity or promoting the wellbeing of the aging population.

There is potential for enterprise development and a growth of lifestyle recreation in the spectacular scenery that represents the Peninsula and to ride off the back of the Port Arthur Historic Site drawcard.

Amalgamation to me would seem a logical way of thinking more regionally and strategically and would potentially be advantageous to the local area.

I would see advantages in Option 2

And would give my vote to a combination of option 3 and 4. IE a greater Hobart as well as regional amalgamations

Thanks for the opportunity to respond

Regards

Nubeena Tas

189

Dear Panel,

I support Option 2 .

The creation of a Single Southern Tasmania Regional Council

Having moved from interstate to Hobart some 13-14 years ago, one issue (re the functioning of government) that is so obvious here is that this State has far too many layers of government for the small population base it supports (approx 500k people statewide).

This is far too inefficient.

One way to assist in fixing this problem would certainly to amalgamate the Southern Councils (of course in time the same model could be applied to North and North-West regions of State)

Now that Councils have lost their Water & Sewerage functions (a major function that they had control of) the time is right for change.

190

To the expert Panel,

Allow me to introduce myself:

Trevor Cordwell

Past experience – Local Government:

Joined Hobart City Council 1976 (four years' service)

1980 appointed acting Secretary federated municipal Employees Union of Australia Tasmanian Division (Now Australian Services Union)
Officially elected to position 1981, held position December 2001 (retired)

1998 appointed to newly formed 'Local Government review Board' ('The Board') – (served in this role through June 2005)

Having gained much experience in local Government prior to appointment to 'The Board' my term serving in this role gave me a greater insight to the overall operations of Councils not just from the representation of those employed in the Councils.

Having taken on the new role of reviewing Council and their operations and submitting reports to the Minister of the day, I along with other colleagues soon became aware of the many failings of the system which Council were operating.

On many occasions and with all good intentions there were those of us representing the Board who endeavoured to encourage the Minister of the day to seriously consider further merger/amalgamation of a number of Councils that clearly were no longer viable. Unfortunately our reports were watered down, changed to satisfy the political circumstances of the time.

I will refrain from expanding on my experience regarding those circumstances in this submission to you but stand ready and willing to give input should it be desirable at any time and is of interest to the Panel.

The most important point I wish to elaborate on is a model of Local Government I believe would serve the State well into the future. Given your Panel at this stage is concentrating on the 'Southern Region' I propose the following model for consideration.

Firstly may I express my personal view that the panel unfortunately has chosen options that include crossing that natural divide 'The Derwent Harbour'.

I can say that should the Panel backed by a State Government of strong convictions and not one that gives into local political whims were to propose 'One Greater Southern Council' I would be fully supportive. Should such scenario eventuate it would need to be on the basis the Panel ensured a complete overhaul of the appointment of 'Senior Management' and operations across the Region.

However, failing this option I am of the strong view that the next best option be as follows:

Clarence City Council assume control and manage the whole of the Eastern Region extending from the Municipal boundaries of Glamorgan Spring Bay, Southern Midlands, Brighton, Sorell and Tasman.

Hobart City Council assume control and manage the Region extending from the boundaries of Central Highlands, Derwent Valley, Glenorchy, Kingborough and the Huon Valley.

It stands to reason appropriate modelling of how residents will not be disadvantaged will need to be demonstrated. However, I believe the time is right, the mood of the people has changed dramatically to that where they are expecting more and better services such they will more favourably receive and support responsible change.

I hope my comments are received in the manner in which given and at least bring to the Panel an alternative view from one who has had close involvement with Local Government over some thirty years.

It is fair to say over that time I have not been one to chase media representation rather to deal direct with the Authorities when required. It now is time to be part of the much needed change Local Government needs.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to purposeful and strong recommendations from the panel.

Kind regards

The Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority

Email: independentpanel@netspace.net.au

Re: your review of Local Government.

1. The status quo option with shared services, is in my opinion 'not an option' to be considered.
2. A single Southern Tasmanian Regional Council, does not effectively deal with the requirement of local administration by-and-for local communities. There are simply too many variables between the city of Hobart, and the regional areas to be adequately represented by just one Council.
3. The option for Greater Hobart, with only minor changes to the rest of the region, leaves us with one very populous Greater Hobart, while not properly addressing any real progress for the remaining Councils. It remains, in my opinion, un-wise to create one very significant Greater Hobart municipality, while failing to address change for the region as a whole.
4. That leaves my much preferred option being a Separate Eastern and Western Shores for Hobart and Regional Amalgamations. Let me expand on that preference.

The general idea of reducing the number of Tasmanian Councils has been around for many years, and any of our citizens who have taken even a passing interest in affairs of our State and its administration, would be aware of such ideas.

Example; there was the Nixon Report: "Tasmania into the 21st Century", first made public in July 1997, which advocated just eight regional Councils for the whole State. A very few of the overall recommendations from this report were acted upon, but the reduction in the number of Councils was put in the too-hard basket, and all the local councillors held their portfolios.

On 30th October 2010, The Mercury correspondent, Sue Neales wrote a very good article headed "Tassie must learn from Kennett cuts" where she compared our 29 Councils to that of Victoria, which, under the Kennett Premiership, reduced its number of Councils from 203 to less than 80. Some of the most significant savings and administrative improvements attributed to those Victorian Council reductions were reported in Ms Neales' press article.

Most recently, Mercury writer, Bruce Felmingham, in his article published on Sunday 10th July 2011, again analysed the situation of Tasmania's split of Local Council areas as being "full of flaws" and he also opted for an overall reduction State-wide to possibly just eight Councils.

It was interesting to note that neither of the aforementioned media reports attracted any significant responses immediately following their publication, which rather disappointed me; so I am happy that your committee has brought these issues to the attention that they deserve.

The option for separate Eastern and Western shores of Hobart are determined as follows;

1. Each separate shore as envisaged by your proposal has what I believe to be adequate size and population to form efficient separate Councils. Each side of the river have considerably different environments in which to operate. Just one Greater Hobart Council would make it very significantly the largest Council in the State, but knowing the parochial nature of many of the State's inhabitants; it may be unwise to set out to dominate the other regions state-wide. A more even distribution would put the remaining smaller communities at less of a perceived disadvantage.
2. The Western side of the Derwent, starting in Bridgewater and extending to Kinston / Blackmans Bay has a number of significant facilities which are not repeated on the eastern shore. Those include the Hobart port which hosts a number of international tourist liners, the seat of Government and its attendant bureaucracy, the Royal Hobart Hospital, the Tasmanian University, the Casino, MONA, Elwick Racing Tracks, the Derwent Entertainment Centre, the Antarctic Centre, and of course the largest asset of all; Wellington Park. One of the ongoing issues facing the western shore is its traffic movements from one end of the proposed local government area to the other. In distance from Blackmans Bay to Bridgewater, it is almost as far as the distance separating Devonport and Burnie on the North-West Coast, but it has a host more problems to be overcome to enable anything like the freedom of transit afforded to the much smaller populations of the North-West, or in fact anywhere else in Tasmania.
3. As for some of the municipal boundaries that would be effected by such changes, there needs to be specific consideration given to some of the following; (a) to ensure that Wellington Park boundaries are so far as is possible, include all the extremities of the Park falling within the boundaries of the new Hobart municipality. (b) currently the northern boundary of Glenorchy lies just south of the Bridgewater Bridge junction and almost on a line with the preliminary plans for a new bridge across to the eastern side of the River Derwent. I guess that between 85% and 90% of traffic using the current crossing emanate from Glenorchy, along with the railway line. This boundary needs to be moved upstream beyond Bridgewater Bridge in the direction of New Norfolk, to allow the revised West Derwent municipality to be responsible for this rather critical highway junction.

4. As for the Eastern shore community it can be described as predominantly a dormitory suburb, with few significant facilities; the exceptions being the Llanherne Airport, the Bellerive Oval catering for cricket and football, and the Transport Hub being developed in Brighton. It however has some fairly significant issues arising from relatively recent housing developments in low-lying areas adjacent to some of the finest beach-front properties anywhere in the country. A separate Eastern Shore Council would have a significant and growing population, and would have issues that are not relevant to the Western side of the River Derwent, so I believe the two areas are best managed separately.

The remainder of the proposal opting for just three regional Councils seems to offer very workable options for Southern Tasmania as a whole.

192

My comments are;

Option 1 - does not achieve much, councils would be bickering over who uses what resources, who has priority etc, larger councils would be subsidising the smaller councils to exist

Option 2 - good, but could end up being too powerful or too much for the state govt to handle, a big single entity may become lazy and bureaucratic, the seat of power would be in the hobart cbd which would upset many

Option 3 - good, but ignores the natural divide btw eastern and western shore, the greater hobart council would be strong, and the surrounding rural councils weak

Option 4 - preferred option, good balance btw city and rural, there would exist some natural competition for business btw the east and the west

My vote is 4 then 3 then 2, 1 is pointless

Regards

193

The best option for Councils in Southern Tasmania

A single Southern Tasmanian Regional Council to create a powerful local government structure with the resources to enable Tasmania to compete with the world in a modern economy.

Tourist operators need assistance with infrastructure to compete with other tourist destinations around the world. Not everyone wants to or is able to carry a backpack and tent to see Tasmania. We need to attract more than the young and fit. It would be good in walking areas to stop and maybe have a beer or coffee and a meal. We have friends in Melbourne who say they travel to Italy to walk because they do not want to carry a back pack nor do they want to pay someone to carry it for them. They have often thought of walking in Tasmania but have not because of lack of facilities.

Hobart and surrounding council areas are looking very neglected and dirty. We recently had friends from England and Austria visit us. We had to make plans around which streets to use that are not dirty and littered with rubbish, especially on the eastern shore. The plants along roadsides also need a lot of attention. I believe that when you drive through a city you can see if it is poor or reasonably prosperous. Hobart and surrounding areas look tired and poor.

Local Government needs money to attend to these things and also to fund events that bring people together from the north to the South and vice versa. This may help to break up the parochialism within the State which almost strikes me as medieval tribalism. Perhaps an annual Tasmanian Flower Show shared between Devonport, Launceston and Hobart. The whole city could take part as well. The parochial ideas such as we often see in the paper about who should pay more for the use of the Hobart Aquatic Centre beggars belief in a modern Society. It shows how strapped the councils are for funds and is embarrassing.

A bigger business model would also attract managers with the skills to administer funds more effectively and hopefully better planning rather than the ad hoc Management of a whole lot of councils with questionable qualifications to do the job.

The State government should look at reducing the total number of councils in the State so that decisions that affect all of us as we travel or holiday in different areas of the state can be better co-ordinated to the benefit of all of us.

We are a state with a very small population of 500,000 people supporting a state government and 12 Councils just in the Southern area. How long can this go on without eroding services even more?

lastly it would save a lot of money with better integrated services to free up money to provide the infrastructure to make living in Tasmania a lot more pleasant. sincerely

194

Southern Tasmania Councils Authority

Independent Panel

GPO Box 503

Hobart 7001

Dear Panel Members,

My thoughts on the various options from your report are below. I am a recently retired State Government public servant.

1. Status quo with shared services

In general terms I agree with your list of disadvantages. I spent considerable time over the past 12 working years of my career working in the area of shared services amongst others. It does not and will not work, especially if left as a voluntary “opt in” approach. Entities (government agencies and local councils, etc), spend a lot of time explaining how their needs are unique and totally different to that of others, and the fact that they are able to deliver services (such as HR function, IT services, application support and development and so forth) more cheaply and efficiently, than any that could possibly be sourced through Shared Services. Even if it were mandated, little

would change. The approach by many councils would be, in the words of a (former) Senior Government Executive to such a situation is: *“We will offer them (providers of such shared services) every form of assistance, short of actual help.”*

What gets lost in this is the need to see things from a big picture perspective. For example the delivery of potable water across the state 24x7x365, is simply beyond the financial ability of many councils. While a relatively few may be able to do so for their constituents, such an approach ignores the fact that we all expect to get access to potable water as we travel around the state (as indeed would tourists in general), it can't and won't happen while we adopt a blinkered view from the standpoint of 29 councils.

Key infrastructure cannot and should not be delivered on a piecemeal and ad hoc basis.

This option is no option in reality. I do not support it.

2. A single Southern Tasmania Regional Council

In general I agree with the disadvantages listed in the report. As to the disadvantages, I do not see them as outweighing the advantages. In particular, the point about travelling distances to the centre of power while of some concern, typify some comments that are made about many services delivered in this state. Local communities all want schools, police stations, hospitals all right on their local doorstep. While laudable, it ignores the financial and realistic ability of the state to provide and resource ongoing facilities, to a population of only some half a million people. A single entity would provide for greater critical mass and should see an end to demarcation disputes that occur between some councils, an example being the concern of some Hobart City Aldermen over the question of financial operation of the Hobart Pool Complex where Hobart ratepayers bear the cost, yet the facility is used by many people from many council localities. There are many examples of such issues between many councils. Twenty nine councils basically pursue their own interests and agendas often with little interest or concern for broader issues.

This option is my preferred one.

3. A Greater Hobart, with some amalgamation of others and status quo for the rest.

Again, in general I concur with the advantages listed in the report. Most if not all of the disadvantages would not be relevant if option 1 is adopted. The point on possible loss of local identity is one that some incumbent councillors (and others) are even now raising in their opposition to possible mergers. There is the very real possibility that all 29 councils will argue loss of identity (and that fact that they

consider themselves as special and unique), amongst other points of narrow self-interest. Such a self-serving approach does little to advance the State and has continually bogged us down over the decades.

Should Option 2 not gain support, this option would be my second choice.

4. Separate Eastern and Western Shores for Hobart, plus regional amalgamations.

I believe that the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages. It would leave the Eastern Shore pitted against the Western Shore, a ridiculous situation particularly for a relatively small capital city.

Such a proposal is highly likely to harden lines of demarcation and lead to more disputes over service delivery and costs of so doing. (The Hobart Pool mentioned above, being but one simple example of such scenarios, others being sporting facilities, and so forth).

I do not support this option.

Conclusion

In summary I believe that the idea of Tasmania continuing to entertain the notion of 29 councils is absurd and is simply not practicable. Twenty nine councils each wanting to do their own things, often in total isolation, is no longer tenable. For decades we have had a multitude of planning and building regulations, with the councils collectively doing very little about it. In a State the size of Tasmania this is a nonsense. And this situation has been exemplified in many instances. How many councils each had to do their own trials of wheelie bins? And then one by one they started to roll them out.

And now in 2011 we are starting to hear some Aldermen and would -be Aldermen canvassing trial of green wheelie bin waste collection.

2. A single Southern Tasmania Regional Council is the first and best option.

3. A Greater Hobart, with some amalgamation of others and status quo for the rest is the second best option.

Options 1 and 4 are neither feasible nor practical.

Yours Sincerely,

29 September 2011

195

I am in favour of a variation of the Greater Hobart City Council proposal, with just Glenorchy and Hobart City Council merging and Clarence remaining unchanged. My views are summarised in a yet to be published letter to the Mercury, which responded to an article on "merger fears" published in the Mercury on 28 Sept.

East vs West

Jack Smith (Mercury On-line 27 Sep) accuses me of backing the horse called "self interest", when opposing the merging of Clarence with other Hobart Councils. If I were doing so I doubt if I would be backing such an unpopular nag! That said, I do not apologise for advocating the self interest of Clarence rate payers because that is what councillors are paid to do. Clarence has substantially the lowest operating costs per capita of any Hobart Council and averaging of these costs through amalgamation can only mean an increase in costs, for Clarence.

I am not against amalgamating ALL councils. There is logic in advocating the amalgamation of the smallest Tasmanian Councils and the 13 of them with 10,000 or fewer living in their municipalities may indeed have trouble justifying their existence. That said, to suggest that the creation of a combined Southern or Greater Hobart Council would necessarily be an improvement just because "bigger is better", could well turn out to be a false premise. From experience in integrating large systems in both local and state government, certain truths have become self evident. Beyond a certain critical size, economies of scale resulting from common procurement and systems integration are often offset by diseconomies of scale, such as the increase in bureaucracy, management and remuneration associated with increasing size. E.g. how much has really been saved with the amalgamation of southern water and sewerage?

Furthermore, predicted improvements in efficiency resulting from a reduction in the number of elected officials may be offset by worsened governance and the increase in the number of unaccountable bureaucrats and media staff, as occurred with the reduction in the size of the Tasmanian parliament from 36 to 25.

Lastly, if there is one common attribute to nearly all systems integration projects, it is that their original cost and time estimates are exceeded or even multiplied. Why? Because systems and processes in large organisations are complex, have usually evolved over a

long time, have been developed by smart staff at great cost, with a lot training, communication and “learning from mistakes”. To change them suddenly, without a clear idea of what benefits are actually realisable or even a knowledge of what those systems actually do (because they are frequently poorly documented) is a recipe for disaster.

So, at what size does a council reach “critical mass” and should therefore not be a candidate for amalgamation? Perhaps we should be guided by the size of the average population served by average mainland Australian Councils, which is just under 40,000. All three Hobart councils serve larger populations, with Clarence 51,546, Hobart 49,650 and Glenorchy 44,468.

Perhaps a new (?) model that may be workable could be to let Hobart and Glenorchy amalgamate, should that be their popular if misguided intent, but leave Clarence untouched. We would then have two councils serving Hobart with a natural geographic division, the Derwent River. The creation of Eastern and Western Hobart Councils could perhaps be an acceptable compromise solution.

Candidate for Clarence Council

Acton Park

? has this model been proposed? I'm not sure. I've seen a greater hobart council and a greater southern council suggest but not a two councils for hobart model.

Just an afterthought. I have had a discussion where it was put to me that I am just suggesting option 4 of SCA East/West model. I think it important to note that there are differences. Whereas the SCA model proposes ...

- Eastern Shore – comprising Clarence, Brighton and the urban part of Sorell (approximately 80,000 people)
- Western Shore – comprising Hobart, Glenorchy and urban Kingborough (approximately 125,000 people)

...what I am proposing is only Hobart and Glenorchy merge and Clarence remain as it is. Ie no merging with Sorell, Brighton or Kingborough. Merging is hard and expensive. Merging with multiple councils increases complexity exponentially, imo. Perhaps my model should be called "East West Lite"!

regards

Submission to Independent Panel re Local Government

My background:

I have had experience as an elected local government councillor in both Tasmania and the U.K.:

1. U.K. - Glendale Rural District Council, 1970 – 1973.
2. Tasmania – New Norfolk Council, mid 1970s to mid 1980s.

I am opposed to the single southern council regional model. As it says, it's **regional**. Sorry, but we need **local** government, where there are sufficient local members who can make informed decisions about their locality. Adopting this regional model risks throwing a whole maternity ward of babies out with the bathwater!

To give you an example of what can happen: the Glendale Rural District Council, of which I was a member, was amalgamated with Berwick-upon-Tweed and others in early 1973, when I returned to Australia. The council's offices had been located in Wooler, a small country town. When I returned in 2003 to visit friends, I was surprised to find a beautiful fountain had been removed from the town square. Apparently the bureaucrats in (relatively) distant Berwick-upon-Tweed had decided to remove the fountain, even though the residents of Wooler had strongly objected. This action flew in the face of what should be one of the key principals of government decision-making – that of *subsidiarity*. This principal requires decisions to be made as close to the people affected as possible – not by faceless bureaucrats who may not have visited the area.

Indeed, if we look at the U.K. now, we will see it has devolved power in regional and local matters to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments. As I understand it Scotland, which is about the size of Tasmania, has 32 councils. This is because Scotland, like Tasmania, has a fairly dispersed population.

Perhaps I should also point out that the Rundle Government came to grief in the late 1990s partly as a result of its insistence on forcing amalgamation onto councils, such as Glenorchy. As a resident of Austins Ferry for twenty something years, I can assure you that Glenorchy residents at that time fought Rundle's proposals very hard.

I also caution against any drastic reduction in elected members. One of the tenets of democracy is that multiple points of view should be represented in places of assembly, whether they be parliaments or councils.

I therefore submit that:

1. Tasmania does not adopt the single southern regional government model,

2. Elected member numbers are not reduced to the extent that multiple points of view are no longer represented in local councils, and
3. In the case of any amalgamations, local committees be explicitly made mandatory in communities to ensure that decisions which affect these communities are made by them, in accordance with the principal of *subsidiarity*.

Furthermore, I caution this panel against being swayed by arguments from the big end of town, such as the Property Council and Chambers of Commerce. They have vested interests, and their views all too frequently confuse governments with being businesses. They are not – they are there to serve their communities!

Yours sincerely

197

I have lived in the Derwent Valley for nearly 11 years and have a property at Lachlan as well as owning a business in New Norfolk. I'm currently secretary of the Derwent Valley Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a member of the Business Alliance and also on Council's Willow Court Special Committee. Consequently, apart from my dealings with Council as an individual ratepayer, I have had many dealings with Council on business, tourism and related matters.

As a business owner and resident I have found Council frequently to be unresponsive to requests for information or advice and assistance, and in the case of some officers even discourteous. Requests to Council seem to be regarded as an impertinence. Council often doesn't reply to correspondence or even acknowledge receipt, and some officers won't return phone calls. In one recent instance, after trying for 6 months to get action from Council on a specific matter, we had to go to the Ombudsman to get action, on what was a straight forward administrative matter. This is not an isolated instance.

Council is reactionary rather than being proactive and showing initiative as is the case with Councils such as Southern Midland and Brighton. Communication with the local community and stakeholders is almost non-existent, and there is an increasing trend for important issues to be discussed and decisions taken in closed sessions of Council. Consequently, ratepayers as a whole have little or no voice in matters which can adversely affect their livelihood and quality of life in the Valley – in contrast to some big developers.

We see other Councils such as Southern Midlands, working in partnership with local businesses and the community to obtain funding, for restoration of significant heritage buildings. By contrast Derwent Valley Council has done nothing to preserve one of the most significant heritage sites in the country, presiding over the vandalism and further decay of Willow Court, squandering large sums of money in the

process. No wonder the Federal and State Governments withheld or withdrew their matching grants. Many of us in the valley have lost all confidence in this Council's competence and commitment to operate in an effective and efficient manner to provide the infrastructure and services we expect and to manage the finances in an accountable and transparent manner.

So, amalgamation with Central Highlands and the western part of Southern Midlands as suggested under Option 4 would have many attractions. Apart from increased efficiency we'd hopefully get a Council which was service oriented and committed to openness and fairness in its dealings with ratepayers and would respond positively to concerns raised by ratepayers instead of just ignoring them and regarding ratepayers who raise issues as a nuisance. At a February Council meeting this year two Councillors made personal attacks on ratepayers who were exercising their democratic right to lobby Councillors on a particular development. With amalgamation there would be a bigger pool of candidates to choose from so we'd hopefully get a majority of Councillors (instead of the 2 or 3 we currently have) who were proactive, forward-looking and with initiative.

Lachlan

198

Attached is a letter published by the Derwent Valley Gazette, but with the 2nd paragraph on DVC Administration omitted. All comments made in this letter can be substantiated. Council ignored a legal directive from RMPAT in 2004 and we are still trying to get it resolved.

I don't favour amalgamation into one huge Southern Tasmanian Council, since the argument of economy of scale would be negated by distances to be travelled. I do hope that something happens this time - I recall being told by a representative of former Treasurer Michael Aird years ago that amalgamation was under consideration, and I said "Oh, Please!"

Yours in hope

Lachlan

I was amused to read that there are "fears that the Valley would lose [its] voice in amalgamation". What voice would that be? We have a Council that has closed meetings to discuss matters of community concern – those matters, that is, that Council doesn't ignore

altogether. It tries to push back onto the State Government issues – such as Willow Court – which it finds too hard, again surrendering the community's right to a voice.

And we have a Council administration which is biased, irresponsible and incompetent; which “forgets” to carry out its duties (even where there is a legal requirement) where it suits, and which doesn't bother to answer correspondence to individual ratepayers on anything it finds inconvenient, such as giving an explanation of its actions.

The Derwent Valley is a small local government electorate with a similarly small field from which to recruit Councillors, with the consequence that only 3 of the present incumbents show any commitment to the community as a whole; (at a recent Council meeting 2 Councillors actually made personal attacks on ratepayers who had exercised their democratic right to lobby them for support), and this situation is unlikely to change at the coming election.

I'm disgusted to find the Gazette taking a biased and parochial position on such an important local issue. Amalgamation with neighbouring councils would overcome many problems and produce economies of scale, to ratepayers' benefit.

GPO Box 545,
Hobart 7001
30 Sept 2011

Southern Tasmania Councils Authority,
Macquarie Street,
Hobart.

Dear

Emphasis on the four options has been on cost savings and efficiencies. Also much of the discussion has been conducted in a Hobart-centric way or 'city-centric' way. Little attention has been given to the manner in which any new arrangement would serve people and populations at a distance from Hobart.

Has there been sufficient information about the 'how the transition' if any, would occur?

It has taken many years for the Ports Authority changes of the 1990's to evolve, and with questionable success. The same early missteps affected many areas in the amalgamations and amalgamations about 1994.

There needs to be more information about provision of services given to people out of Hobart & Hobart residents will notice little change as

a result of any of the models, and are likely to be unaware of the depth of effects which will be felt in the hinterland. Have any sociologists been asked to predict effects of any of the models on non-city people?

Have any cost benefits or more likely cost increases, been calculated to illustrate increased costs borne by people because of costs in time and financially to participate in council services?

Have councils themselves had sufficient consultation and consideration of medium to long term effects of any of the models.

Yours faithfully,

200

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I live in Dover in Far South Tasmania within the Huon Valley Council area.

I have read a lot of information about various options for councils.

I have come from a very successfully amalgamated council area on the North Island. (The Shire of Yarra Ranges)

My observations and opinions follow.

Any amalgamation would be better than the waste I see now across a state that is broke.

Amalgamations MUST be agreed to by rate payers who understand what is happening to their 'voice' in their town area.

Therefore, it is essential that every detail is openly discussed so the process and the outcomes are clear to all.

Finances of amalgamating Councils must also be presented to all simply and honestly.

'Jobs for the boys' and current cronyism must not continue into the new order.

Councils' roles must be clarified so everyone is aware, the roles are agreed on and exactly the same throughout the state.

There should be a concise definition of local government responsibilities that does not allow for independent Councils to claim a point of difference or, for there to be blurring of Council boundaries with the role of the State Government which I see happening too often now.

My preference would be for a Greater Hobart Council, an amalgamation from Spring Bay to Huon Valley, under the auspices of an independent arbitrator and a skeleton staff, run for 2 years and reviewed before a 'local council election' is held.

No present member of staff of the amalgamating councils would be given a position until after the 2 years of independent arbitration and then only having gone through a formal job search and review process including a formal application for a publicly advertised position.

There should be far greater responsibility placed upon elected Councillors than currently occurs and far less handed to Council staff, especially General Managers.

All meetings should be open to all. NO 'CLOSED' COUNCIL. After all it's OUR MONEY.

Should a rate-payer make the effort to attend a Council meeting to make a point about Council activity or business, that rate-payer should be granted time to address, question and consult with Councillors in the meeting that he attends. A system of timed appointments should be instigated as part of each Council meeting.

Rate-payers will lose their local connection with current Councils under any amalgamation. There needs to be a system of credible, regular, consultation with a Councillor in each town or local area so that rate-payers are still 'connected.'

The Shire of Yarra Ranges arranged for township groups, so that local communication was enhanced and a conduit provided for information to and from rate-payers. These groups were not sub committees of Council and directed by Council. These were vibrant, independent groups of interested residents who knew their own community needs and acted to improve their community with the full support of Council. Councillors were actually responsible for 'making it happen'

The Tasmanian system is costly, poorly managed, variable and does not provide for open governance or ensure rate-payers are heard. Any amalgamation would have to be an improvement but, if we decide to change let's do it well and for the long term good of this lovely place. Consult directly with rate-payers all the way.

Yours Sincerely,

201

Dear Panel,

I've just read in The Mercury online that the majority of Tasmanians support Council amalgamations.

I wish to register my **STRONG OPPOSITION** to Council Amalgamations. I see a good case for formal agreements by neighbouring councils to share expensive equipment, but can see **NO BENEFIT WHATSOEVER** IN AMALGAMATING all the bodies that currently each make decisions on a specific region, on which they are well informed because of residence and local knowledge.

Furthermore, if a single council were to be responsible for the whole of southern Tasmania, it would be long before Councillors and Council Officers demanded higher allowances/wages because of the extra responsibility and the need to travel further etc etc etc.

In fact, I think Tasmania should concentrate on strengthening regional centres to avoid the problems created by large cities, and really build community spirit in the existing council areas.

202

Having reviewed the paper provided and the options available I support Option 2 – one Southern Tasmanian Council. I feel in this State we are over governed, seem to repeat many times over the duplication, triplication etc of services and resources and we are now at the point that we (the Tasmanian people) cannot sustain ourselves for the long term into the future. The time is now to be brutal and only have maybe 2-3 councils state-wide that is affordable and hopefully do away with other levels of government in the not too distant future (a discussion for another day, perhaps a unicameral parliament!) so we can live within our means and capabilities. I applaud the writers of this report and truly hope that the moves are made as quickly as possible across the whole state.

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward my opinion
Yours Sincerely

Geilston Bay, Tas, 7015.

203

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write to advise we both consider the Separate Eastern & Western Shores for Hobart & Regional Amalgamations to be the preferred option of the 4 presented for consideration by the community.

Yours truly

South Hobart
TAS 7004

204

Southern Tasmanian Council Authority,

Merging with other councils should not occur! From a public perspective, the Clarence City Council has achieved more in the last decade than others. Although I haven't compared councils, its services appear to be superior to others in Southern Tasmania - especially regarding rates!

I believe that merging with others will only absorb the problems presently experienced by other councils. A submission is also being thought of.

205

Feedback towards improved Local Government in Southern Tasmania.

On Wednesday night, 28th September 2011, at the Westerway Bush Watch meeting, with twelve of our fourteen members in attendance, we voted unanimously for option 3.

Our main reason, the amalgamation that took place several years ago saw Hamilton Council and Bothwell Council amalgamate, and no real difference was noticed, due to both areas being the same in population, roads, employment, job opportunity and rates.

With option 3, the same will happen again, most of the population, employment and job opportunities are in the greater Hobart area, and this option will have little effect on Central Highlands and Derwent Valley Councils.

By choosing one of the other options, the whole system could become dysfunctional in its governance and operations with almost no representation on the proposed council. We envisage our rates going through the roof to pay for the upkeep of the more populated areas eg. Southern Water, that's happening to us now!

S.T.C.A. bring in three strangers, who probably never even visited Tasmania, to make recommendations, and know nothing of the different councils except what the S.T.C.A. have allowed them to know. Does this show the 'expert panel' that we just can't make decisions of our own undertakings or is this the start of parochial differences between the three regions if they go ahead?

In your 'goals' you give 7 objectives and we believe you have duplicated these objectives.

1. 'A more resilient and productive Tasmanian economy' is the same as 'eliminating duplication'
2. 'improved advocacy and representation of the region', is the same as 'improved community engagement'.
3. 'improved efficiency' is the same as 'saving money'.

So your only goal is 'a simple and clear system of governance'. This is what we want!! So option 3 for us.

Thank you
Sincerely
Westerway Bush Watch

206

Dear Panel,

After internal discussion, I've been asked to complete our Club members' collective response.

Option 2 - Southern Tasmania has a very common focus and this proposed model captures us all under the one umbrella.

- Representation :- the 12 current municipalities to enjoy one Councilor from each, with Glenorchy, Clarence, Kingborough attracting an additional one, then allowing Hobart 14. This make up would provide a balanced environment, not dominated by a single municipality. Hoping our brief response will assist in delivering a more frugal local government system.

PS, this elected model would then allow for the termination, of the Local Government Association of Tasmania (an un-elected) body. (Tour Organiser, Combined Probus Club of Derwent Valley) tasked with the Club's response.



1113 Main Road, Nelson Tas 7191
 Telephone: 03 6250 9200
 Fax: 03 6250 9201
 Email: tasman@tasman.tas.gov.au
 Website: www.tasman.tas.gov.au
 ABN 61 081 010 117

1st October 2011

Independent Review Panel
 c/- STCA
 GPO Box 503
 HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Madam and Sirs,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURAL REFORM OPTIONS REVIEW

Thank you for providing Tasman Council the opportunity to lodge a submission on the above process and related matters. Council considered the report at their September workshop and Ordinary Council meeting with some Councillors also attending the STCA workshop earlier in the month.

As a preliminary submission, it is Councils view that the review undertaken should include the entire State to properly and completely investigate the forecast positive and negative impacts from the application of the same principles and options. Council further submits that despite the opinions gathered from the population sampling carried out to date, there has been no real targeted and representative community consultation of the Tasman municipal area of the options as they relate to our Council. This must be undertaken to properly appreciate the views and aspirations of our ratepayers prior to any decision being made that may impact on Council.

The importance of providing local representation is arguably greater for remote and rural communities as is the case with Tasman. As state and federal services decline in these areas, there is greater reliance on the Council staff and elected members. It is Councils view that retaining the current governance structure, with communities of common interest represented at the local level and targeting efficiencies through alternative service delivery, is a sound and appropriate approach.

Council is committed to implementing responsible and accountable local governance with respect to limiting rate increases to CPI (CCI) and controlling operational costs to ensure maximum benefit is provided to our ratepayers. Key local government financial sustainability indicators are a short, medium and long term focus for Tasman Council's performance, particularly with regard to asset management.

This is achieved in part through a focused strategic direction of cost efficiencies gained through the utilisation of service delivery from our 'partners' in Brighton and Glenelg Spring Bay Councils where expertise and functionality is shared on commercial terms. This has proven results ranging from a reduction of administrative and IT duplication, increased Councils expertise and resilience and improved

outcomes overall for our ratepayers. Elected members are also committed to this approach and are considering a staged reduction in Councillor numbers over the next four years.

Council will be further developing the shared service arrangement with the above Councils including the utilisation of 'cloud' technology for remote access of financial and regulatory systems, virtual attendance at Council workshops and meetings for specialised professional functions and the monitoring and application of a centralised asset management system.

Council respectfully submits that the strategic direction and model we have implemented over the past three years will result in us demonstrating a financially robust, sustainable and effective local government entity for our ratepayers and visitors. In this respect, Council does not support the implementation of any of the four options as being necessary for our continuation. The relative size and population statistics of Tasman compared to other metropolitan and regional Councils should not be discounted with regard to service delivery, efficiency, ratepayer engagement, representation and sustainability.

Council further considers it inappropriate to nominate which of the four options it may prefer if they were to be implemented as they are likely to result in significant change to the future of the other member Councils. In this regard, we submit that this is a matter more appropriately addressed by each respective Council.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 0400 123 933 - robert.higgins@tasman.tas.gov.au or Mayor Jan Barwick on 02 509 250 - jan.barwick@tasman.tas.gov.au

Yours sincerely,

Robert Higgins
 GENERAL MANAGER
 TASMAN COUNCIL

208

Dear Panel

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the future options for local government in Southern Tasmania. It is great to see the options being investigated however I do not believe any of the options have necessarily got it right.

I think it is imperative that any reconfiguration of council boundaries takes in to account the social, cultural and natural values of these areas, not just the economic and administrative needs. I agree there is merit in a Greater Hobart Council and that the city should not be divided by the Derwent River. However the inclusion of urban Kingborough in Greater Hobart is a concern. Urban Kingborough (excluding Tarooma) is geographically separated from metropolitan Hobart by vegetated hills extending from Mount Wellington to the Derwent. This sense of distinction and separation should be reflected in the Council boundaries not lost through amalgamation. To combine urban Kingborough with metropolitan Hobart gives the impression that Hobart to Kingston is a continuum and these areas will be under pressure to be developed rather than form a natural limit to metropolitan Hobart.

The urban areas of Kingborough (especially Kingston but also Margate) primarily service the Huon and Channel communities, not the urban residents of metropolitan Hobart. The communities reliant on these service centres should have a say in their future (within the context of metropolitan Hobart) not the residents and elected representatives of Hobart. To separate all the urban areas of Southern Tasmania from the rural would further isolate the rural areas and create large areas of the region with limited services, significant road networks, extensive coastlines, numerous small settlements, very important natural values and an extremely small rate base.

I would encourage the investigation of alternative models for getting the councils within the Greater Hobart to work together - amalgamation is too simplistic and does not adequately take in to account the needs of the non-urban areas within municipalities such as Kingborough.

If amalgamations do proceed, combining Kingborough with the Huon to form a larger Huon/Channel Council has some logic providing there are good governance structures in place for local communities to have input in to how their locality develops/is managed. Kingston should remain part of this lga and the only part of Kingborough which logically belongs with Hobart is Tarooma.

There are also options for resource sharing across Southern Councils to increase efficiencies, particularly in relation to services which are common across council boundaries (eg environmental health) and emerging issues (eg sea level rise, regulating vegetation clearance and natural area management).

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Whatever options are pursued they need to reflect the needs and character of the communities they are there to serve, not just the needs of Tasmania's capital city.

kind regards

Cygnet TAS 7112

209

To the Independent Panel

Writing in response to your invitation to comment, I would put forward the following for consideration.

I am as concerned as everyone to ensure councils perform effectively and efficiently in service delivery. It is obvious at the moment that this is not so, and one has only to look at the chaos that is the planning system, and the mess that was the water and sewage arrangements, to recognise this fact.

The tendency at such times is always to look to amalgamate and streamline, and there are at first glance some obvious savings to be made. However, there are also many examples where bringing together organisations with different cultures can actually be to the detriment of service outcomes. So bigger is not necessarily better. Small can also be effective (eg Brighton) and it really boils down to what culture drives the organisation rather than its size.

I note you were seeking comment on the 4 Options only.

Option 1 resolves little, as past attempts to share facilities etc have not been particularly successful.

Option 2 is concerning for a number of reasons:
It will have lost its local focus

It will be under no pressure to perform

It will enter into (or at least become more interested in entering) a political environment at the expense of service delivery.

If it stuffs up for whatever reason, the entire region will suffer.

Option 3 has some merit cost-wise, but having a greater urban council runs the risk of being overly powerful and overbearing of its smaller rural neighbours. The behaviour of the Brisbane City Council under Jim Soorley is a classic example of this behaviour, and was most unhelpful.

Option 4 has greater merit in that it breaks up the monopolistic approach of Option 3.

However, a further view:

I am attracted to the proposition that people in the Greater Hobart region think of themselves geographically as being northern, southern or eastern, and that a government structure should accommodate that fact if it is to achieve an appropriate sense of "community and place". A proposal to create 3 relatively equal entities, around the present 3 cities, would achieve much that is being sought after without the downsides mentioned above. In fact it would achieve entities with a population of around 80,000 (NB Victorian LGA's have an average size of 65,000) and enable the development of a positive creative tension that would be a continuing feedback mechanism on performance, investment and delivery outcomes. In other words, they could "benchmark" each other.

Attached is an article recently published in "the Mercury" newspaper, which also contains the views expressed above. Also a copy of a report on Tasmania written back in August. In particular please note the section commencing on p25, headed "Barriers to Effectiveness".

I would be happy to elaborate further on this proposal.

Regards

Attachment: Mercury OpEd

Local Government amalgamation is back on the agenda after a hiatus of some 15 years, this time sponsored by the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority appointing an Advisory panel (STCA), and with active lobbying from the Property Council. Back in 1993, after years of often acrimonious debate, the number of Councils was reduced from 49 to 29. A more recent move to rekindle the debate was aborted in 1997.

The Property Council has been arguing for some time that rate rises are too steep, that systems diverge widely, and that the various planning schemes are inconsistent and in many cases out-of-date. They provide as evidence of their case a report from Deloitte Access Economics, which considered specifically the Tasmanian circumstance.

The Advisory Panel has recently released 4 options for consideration. In brief, they are: Option 1 - no change, maybe some shared services. Option 2 – One large regional Council. Option 3 – A greater urban Hobart surrounded by smaller rural councils. Option 4 – as per option 3, but with a separate Eastern Shore Council. Although these have been put forward for discussion purposes only, are these the only options? I think not.

If, as seems likely, amalgamation is the answer, then first let us consider what specifically is the question. How to improve service delivery? How to reduce rates? How to provide a consistent approach to planning issues? How to provide improved amenity? As you can see, there is more than one question. And this can lead to what are the issues that should be priorities when considering the role of Councils. For the purposes of this piece, I will simply accept that the argument is about doing existing activities better, rather than doing different things.

As stated in the STCA paper entitled “Participation and Place”, Tasmanians have a strong sense of place. Tasmania is very regional and rural in its nature, with some distance separating its major centres. This sense of place has been enshrined in the very local nature of local government, which has developed an identity forged by history, a history that has involved significant isolation. To therefore suggest a coalescence of local government groups inevitably comes across this barrier of losing identity.

At the same time, modern communications and transport links make the historic barriers redundant, and the greater sophistication in service and amenity delivery demands economic efficiencies which - it is suggested - amalgamation brings.

In considering the opportunities, we need to consider some salient points:

Point Communities regard themselves within a geographic framework.

Point Local government is by its nature local, and is based around the sense of community. It is not regional.

Point Some services, once very local, are now best delivered at a regional level.

Point Amalgamations can be a political minefield – whoever makes the decision will not receive unanimous support.

Point Bigger does not necessarily mean better. It can mean worse. Small can be beautiful, but does require a critical mass.

The suggestion from the Panel that political power should be a consideration is passing strange. Power is a tool in the toolbox which can be used to advantage, but badly used can do enormous damage. I would have thought that service delivery was of paramount importance and political authority a secondary consideration.

There are four natural geographical environments around Hobart where rural and regional coalescences could occur:

Derwent and Central Highlands

Brighton and Southern Midlands
Sorell, Tasman and possibly Glamorgan/Spring Bay
Kingborough and Huon

The question then is whether to amalgamate the three cities of Hobart, Glenorchy and Clarence, or the alternative proposition of a western entity - Hobart and Glenorchy – and an eastern entity – Clarence. This then is the essential matter raised by the Panel in its Options 3 and 4.

Whereas I am attracted to the idea of an efficient urban Council, the attraction is based on the ability to provide a more consistent approach to planning and an improved delivery of services. However, this may not automatically be the case, and in fact, could lead to a more pronounced and difficult bureaucracy for the urban area, and to leave behind the rural areas. There is an alternative, which I believe was first proposed by Marti Zucco.

Each of the coalesced regional entities would have a natural hub – New Norfolk, Brighton, Sorell and Kingston. Each of these could serve not just as a central focus for its region, but as a satellite for a larger entity, based around the 3 city centres of Hobart, Glenorchy and Clarence.

The eventual structure would become three major entities, geographically based, each with its satellite environment, and each with approximately equal numbers.

The advantages of such an approach would be a reduction in the number of Councils from 12 to 3, but retaining a geographic integrity. Each would have a similar critical mass of ratepayers (around 80,000) that could ensure a sounder financial base. And each would be under a competitive tension to perform their functions effectively by acting as a benchmark for others. A mistake by one would not then affect the entire southern community

There would then be an opportunity for “The Big THREE” to make further savings via pooling planning facilities and back office functions. Not the only option I am sure, but one that does deliver to the various needs so far expressed.

Attachment: A Report on Tasmania - PRESENT PROSPECTS OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

(Please note this report was attached to the submission but has not been included in this document - if you would like a copy it can be “Googled” or email the panel and we will send you a copy.)