

22 August 2022

Local Government Board
Department of Premier and Cabinet

By email only

LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Board

Firstly, on behalf of Council I wish to thank the Board for the opportunity to respond to the Local Government Board's Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report.

In accordance with Council's initial submission dated the 14th May 2022, Northern Midlands Council reaffirms its preferred model and provides additional comments associated with the Stage 1 Interim Report.

Future Shared Services Projects

NMC believes there is great scope to expand the shared services projects in the region.

Through resource sharing on a regional basis councils can improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services and functions. Importantly, they provide the opportunity for councils to maintain but also to improve service delivery to their communities in response to increasing external pressure resulting from other levels of government and to increasing regulatory, compliance and reporting requirements imposed on them.

Resource sharing can be implemented in a number of ways including:

- Resource sharing through service agreements where councils as a group agree to allocate functions between themselves – one council does a function on behalf of the group. Here a Council outsources a function to another Council.
- Resource sharing through a joint enterprise where Councils form a joint business to achieve economies of scale across a functional area of core business.
- Merger/amalgamation where Councils join together voluntarily.

There are other variations of resource sharing through service agreements. These include agency agreements, where one council performs operations on behalf of other councils as their agent. As well there could be a range of formal and informal arrangements to jointly fund, operate or provide services and share staff, facilities and assets. Examples of these include the sharing of building inspectors and waste management services.

There are opportunities to rationalise and achieve better utilisation of major operational assets such as plant and equipment, depots, workshops, administration centres and office technology, such as IT systems. Specialised items of plant which may have relatively low utilisation levels can be better utilised.

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To achieve a successful outcome from the process of resource sharing it is essential that the process is designed to enable a range of options to be considered and informed decisions made only when the strengths and weaknesses of the options are determined.

Some of the opportunities for shared service delivery/regional collaboration include:

Information Technology:

The company that councils in the region were partnering with withdrew from the project. It is understood that the reason for the withdrawal was because it was of greater financial benefit to the company to deal with each council on an individual basis.

The benefit of common technology platforms is not in the technology cost or operations. Rather, the majority of the potential benefit in shared platforms is in the ability to consolidate and drive synergies in processes across all operations of the councils, regardless of their physical location, size and complexity. This includes the standardisation of all corporate applications (finance, procurement, human resources, etc.) as well as technology platforms used for engineering & GIS, planning & design, asset management and risk management.

Establish a Regional Authority

- Northern Tasmania Waste Management Authority

NTWMA may be formed to provide waste management and resource recovery services. It would receive and process material on behalf of its constituent councils as well as providing waste management services to private industry.

- Waste Management Services
 - Kerbside Bin Collections
 - Hard Waste
 - Resource Recovery Centre
 - FOGO – Green Waste
 - Landfill

- Common Services

Common Services delivery model would involve the councils coming together as stakeholders, looking within the councils for opportunities to undertake shared initiatives at a whole-of-region or sub-regional level.

A common services model would provide participants with the ability and resources to enable quality equitable service provision, as well as generate economic efficiencies and increased viability to participating councils in the region.

The model enables participants to meet legislative requirements, increase consistency of processes between municipalities and develop the reputation and professionalisation of the councils.

- Engineering
- Environmental Health
- Planning/Building
- Building Surveyor

Planning Authority

- Internal and Independent Planning Authorities

There is recognition of the importance of planning to the economy in general, and particularly in housing supply, and hence the importance of improving the efficiency of the development application process.

A local authority may be staffed by officers and/or councillors, and an independent authority comprises of external experts and community representatives.

These collaborative approaches provide increased transparency, integrity and rigour in the development

assessment process. The authorities can be used to provide advice to the applicants, objectors, council officers and councillors on individual development applications at various stages during the assessment process and/or to determine the development application. For example, authorities can be established:

- To provide advice to the applicant at the pre-lodgement stage including on design matters
- To provide advice upon lodgement or once the submissions have been received
- To provide advice on the design of the development at the pre-lodgement stage or during the assessment process
- To peer review the officers' assessment and recommendations
- To make the determination or to provide advice to those making the determination
- To review decisions as part of the post determination mediation/conciliation stage
- To provide advice to the councillors on senior officers on policy and practice matters.

An independent authority may be considered to be a council's body, they can be seen as a partner in the council's processes. This partnership can assist in removing the conflict associated with the multiple roles of councillors as decision maker and advocate, particularly when the authority takes over the decision-making role.

Council's comments associated with the Stage 1 Interim Report.

Draft Role Statement

Council, at this time, has no firm view on the draft role statement, but wish to have the opportunity to comment once the community conversation has progressed further.

Council is appreciative of the importance of the role statements as it will describe in general terms what it delivers to the community.

Six Priority Reform Areas

- Defining Council's Role in the 21st Century

The finalisation of an agreed role statement will define the role of councils in the 21st Century.

Council has identified a number of areas that need recognition:

- Climate change and emergency management and acknowledgement that planning scheme requirements when considering flood management, consideration be given to a minimum of 1:100 plus climate change.

The state should give council the power through legislation to adequately control development in flood prone areas and the funding sources to implement improvements.

- Strategic and Regional Capacity

Council has a leadership role in facilitation, regional governance and strategic planning.

Cooperation and determined protocols between the three tiers of government will lead to the strengthening of intergovernmental relations, particularly between State government and individual or groups of councils, whereby roles and responsibilities are negotiated and agreed in a manner that reflects capacities which we could seek to learn from, build upon, for example the expanding of the principles of the City Deals, including expanding to Regional Deals.

- Efficient and Effective Infrastructure and Service Delivery

A major challenge facing local government in service delivery is the ability to attract a skilled workforce, with the demand for skilled employees outstripping availability.

Council believes improved local delivery of services will occur through innovation and partnerships, e.g. shared contracts for: work health and safety; rubbish collection; plant and equipment; shared officers (e.g. building, environmental health, planners, engineers, youth officers).

- Sound and Consistent Planning and Regulatory Service

Council faces challenges, including the capacity to respond to increased population growth, ease infrastructure bottlenecks, adapt to climate change. Well-designed and implemented regulations can play an important role in dealing with these challenges.

Statewide Planning Scheme. The central issue between the state and local government , which has one of the largest impacts on business costs, is land-use planning regulation. Responsibility for delivering the State's land use planning objectives, rests in significant part with local government.

Recognition that local knowledge is a significant consideration when assessing development applications with matters relating to heritage precincts and development impacting on existing heritage buildings within and outside the heritage precincts.

Northern Midlands Council looks forward to providing further comment once the outcome of Stage 2 of the review is completed.

Yours sincerely



Des Jennings
GENERAL MANAGER