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Subject: FW: Community Consultation Workshop

From: Paul Frisby[redacted]
Sent: Friday, 6 May 2022 10:27 AM
To: Local Government Board <lgboard@dpac.tas.gov.au>
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To whom it may concern

I participated in a Community Consultation Workshop yesterday afternoon at Queenstown and found the experience of worth; and well structured and presented. However I would like to more clearly record suggestions for matters that I believe are important the Board considers in this review.

Briefly (very) my background is in senior and middle management in state and local government with an emphasis on audit, program evaluation, ethical conduct and compliance.I worked for over15 years in local government. I was directly involved in one Council amalgamation and subsequent de-amalgamation in Queensland (the de-amalgamation was a total, costly and painful stuff up due to a lack of political courage); and also observed two rounds of amalgamation in NSW.

I was also a volunteer with State Emergency Services in NSW for over 15 years reaching the level of Deputy Division Controller with a year as Acting Local Controller due to the need to deal with an organisational breakdown in a certain municipality.

I have lived in Queenstown for 4 years in my retirement having come from Central Queensland.

I would commend to the Board the following:

1 I recommend Amalgamation

In my observation and experience no Council with less than a population of 100,000 people is unworkable. That means that Tasmania would need only 5 or 6 local governments and it is easy to draw boundary lines on the map of where those Councils might be.

Any Council smaller than that does not have the revenue base to give it capacity, flexibility and agility to be successful. Both effectiveness and efficiency is impaired as staffing is top heavy (and relatively expensive), under qualified, overworked in broad areas in which they have minimum knowledge, with much work farmed out to often expensive contractors.

Councillors and senior management are too numerous and a cost burden on the community they are supposed to serve.

The Board might make reference to the amalgamation experience in NSW and Qld, and the associated documentation to fill in the extensive reasoning behind this suggestion.

2 I recommend the Legislative Implementation of Performance Measurement.

My Council does not know how it is performing, how it is performing from year to year, or how it is performing compared to other Councils. As the electorate, we cannot judge how our Council is performing and vote accordingly; and the State government, which is also accountable to the electorate for its local governments, cannot judge their performance either until a crisis occurs.

I submit that the Local Government Regulations should include a set of basic performance indicators on which all local governments have to report continuingly to the state government and publically at least annually in their Annual Report. It would be optional of course for local governments to have more than the minimum KPIs prescribed, but those that are prescribed should be across the full range of councils operational and management responsibilities. Where Council's reports deviate significantly from statewide norms, the regulations should also require that the relevant council give a qualitative report to explain why they are performing more or less better than others.

In passing I would also mention the extraordinary delays in this Council's production of their annual report after the end of the financial year. I am unaware of the situation with other Tasmanian Councils. The arrangements are radically different in other states.There is no excuse for annual reports not being produced by the end of November so that any problems can be identified in a timely manner, and the information can be fed through the budget and planning cycle into the annual operational plan for the following year.

3 I recommend further training be offered to Councillors

Getting elected and going through orientation training does not produce a well qualified Councillor. Councillors should be offered an ongoing training program in organisation management and directorial responsibilities, budgeting, ethical conduct and decision making, risk analysis and management, asset management and the like. Participation in such training should be the subject of mandatory reporting and it should be the responsibility of Mayors to promote the participation in such training with Councillors as well as their activity and involvement. The days of only needing to turn up to one meeting a month and raise your hand or murmur "passed" to earn your recompense must end.

While there is plenty of material available for Councillors on the relevant government website already, and more can be found with a diligent general search, this needs to be organised into a structured series of short courses. Such developmental courses might be facilitated through UTS and/or Libraries Tasmania, both of which have a state-wide reach.

4 I recommend that responsibility for Disaster Management (including SES) be a state government responsibility

The increasing complexity of disaster management and the provision of modern equipment, training and resources, along with the potential for more serious events due to climate change, indicates problems lie ahead with current arrangements, While local government has an important role to play in local risk identification, the provision of local response resources under its control, and delivery of local recovery; the management and co-ordination of planning, preparing response, and recovery needs to be moved to a professionally qualified level.

The experience in other states is relevant in the consideration of this suggestion.

This format only provides space for a brief outline of my thoughts on these matters, and I would be pleased to make myself available to explain them further if that is the Board's wish.

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Paul Frisby