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**From:** Bruce Williams [redacted]
**Sent:** Friday, 29 April 2022 5:23 PM
**To:** Local Government Board
**Subject:** Future of Local Government Review Enquiry For Attention Sue Smith

**Importance:** High

For attention

Hon Sue Smith AM
Chair
Local Government Board

Good afternoon Sue,

Today I participated in a workshop at Launceston regarding the Local Government Review Enquiry. I have provided feedback both today and also into the survey on line. I also wanted to provide direct feedback to you.

As a disclaimer up front, I was the Economic Development Officer / Senior Economic Adviser to the City of Launceston over a period of nearly 10 years, concluding service in January 2021. The views expressed are from this perspective but are my own and do not reflect the position of any organisation.

I am not sure if this is useful, but the two videos below encapsulate the opportunities and challenges we face in Launceston and northern Tasmania in local government from the perspective of economic development.

- Community consultation of the population strategy
  - "Population growth… Has the government lost the plot?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlEWqJwLhwY&feature=youtu.be

- Community consultation of relating to prosperity in the City
  - "Prosperity in our city, shopping in the CBD…what's really going on?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1h1mVVYC8A&feature=youtu.be

These videos have been viewed by hundreds of people over the past 18 months. Nobody has disputed the data or the conclusions, and all of the trends and issues identified are intact. Despite economic development being identified as a core local Government activity in the local government review of roles in 2018, I think there are only two of 29 [Launceston (position vacant) and Glenorchy] that have full time personnel focussed and dedicated on supporting economic development. Of the remainder about half have part time officers [this includes Hobart City] and the remaining half have no dedicated position to the task of economic development. In contemporary cities a similar size to Launceston [e.g. Tamworth, Bendigo, Geelong etc.] all have teams of economic development with 6-10 people, specifically designated and tasked to promote, market, attract investment, facilitate investment through Council, coordinate tourism/events etc. These cities are proactively positioning their communities for the future and are seriously committed to get there.

Few Councils in Tasmania have economic development strategies. In 2017 I developed the first one in 15 years for the City of Launceston [how can a city like Launceston operate without a strategy for this period of time?]. Where economic development strategies in local government do exist, there is limited alignment between local government, regional and the state economic development process. Northern Tasmania has an economic development strategy [which I assisted develop], but no resources [human or financial] to implement it. The State does not have a coherent strategy per sec, but rather a bunch of disparate economic activities/interests. This is not to diminish their efforts, but it is not clear where local government fits into this or where local government should align to add value. So the implementation of a cohesive approach to economic development [where strategies exist] is limited by both staff capability [limited numbers of people with experience], lack of staff to do it, financial resourcing and a commitment by Councils to really undertake the task.

Simply put, economic prosperity is the single activity that drives, influences or underpins a whole myriad issues that impact on our communities now and into the future. A serious approach and commitment to addressing the issues raised in the videos is critical to the long term wellbeing of people in Northern Tasmania and Tasmania as a whole.

I have come to the view [as per above] that the existing 29 local governments are incapable of fostering economic prosperity. There could be more contemporary information provided to the Community in this review to assist in supporting a higher level conversation. Your review process could consider the preparation and the sharing of how:-

- Successful and contemporary regional and local economic development is delivered in other local government environments in Australia,
- Tasmanian local government/s perform as benchmarked against this,
- Economic development could be delivered by the State Government… what could this look like … maybe a model similar to the relatively recent establishment of one agency like TasWater to facilitate and manage water and sewage [which was in disarray under local Government],
- Delivery of economic development objectives and positioning communities for the future have been achieved by Australian local government amalgamations,
- The negative impact of "business as usual" [most people in Tasmania believe that no change has no negatives … cost or downside, this could be spelt out]
- Strategic economic development goals can be aligned, and how and who, is responsible and accountable for resourcing and operational implementation.

The thing that was missing today was the acknowledgement that Government has committed to change and to deal with the issue … = "change will occur" which is presumably why the Enquiry is being undertaken. If this had been up front then maybe we would have had more than 11 people turn up out of the 20 who had registered.

I am happy to talk further or clarify if you wish to explore any particular matter.

Kind regards

Bruce.

Bruce Williams
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