



2nd February 2023

The Future of Local Government Review

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Dear Sir / Madam,

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OPTIONS PAPER - REFORM OUTCOMES

Brighton Council held a workshop on 17th January 2023 to discuss the latest release by the Future of Local Government Review Board, including the 33 reform options and the three pathways to achieve reform.

This submission is intended as a summary of this discussion in our workshop, rather than a formal position of Council. Council is very open to reform and improvements to local government to help ensure we give our best to our communities, and we feel it is far too early to develop an agreed position on any of the options. We hope this summary is useful to the Board. Please feel free to get in contact for clarification or expansion on any of the points raised.

Please find attached a tabulated summary of our Council's discussion on the 33 reform options.

With regard to the three potential pathways to reform, we make the following observations.

Council believes the majority of the Brighton community are happy with the status quo with regards to our scale and boundaries. This view is supported by several surveys and polling in recent years. However, Brighton is always open to improvement and new ideas and is keen to play a productive role in improving the local government sector as a whole. Council is open-minded about proposals for boundary changes and/or playing a larger role in its sub-region, but Council will always consider changes through a lens of what is best for our community.

With regards to Pathway 1, there is merit in the concept. Brighton has played a big role in the development of shared services and at times during the past ten years has been effectively running planning and development engineering for up to six councils in addition to other services. However, there could be significant issues in mandating such an approach. Shared services have always worked best when it has clearly been in the interests of both parties and where it is only committed to whilst this mutual benefit remains. Problems will quickly arise if one or both parties feel they are forced to be part of something that is not working effectively for them. There also needs to be a recognition in such a system that small, medium and large councils in Tasmania are effectively different business types and as such necessarily need to perform some operations differently.

With regards to Pathway 2, as mentioned it is likely currently in the best interested of our community (and their preference) to remain within the same boundaries, but we have an open mind to this concept and recognise that whilst it may not be in the Brighton community's best interest, it could be in the interests of the broader region or state to consider changes. However, it is difficult to see how this will automatically lead to more efficient Councils. There will remain the issues of small disperse populations with large infrastructure burdens needing more revenue than their rate base provides and this then being

subsidised by urban populations that are demanding an ever-higher level of service that itself requires more funding. To ensure that service levels and infrastructure assets are properly maintained, government will need to adequately compensate/fund councils that would be taking on a burden of a new area that may be receiving a lower level of service currently to ensure the ratepayers of the expanding council are not significantly disadvantaged.

The other side of this scenario from Brighton's perspective, is that we could certainly expand our municipality in certain directions and not be any worse off, but in doing so we would likely take people and rate base away from smaller councils, further reducing their ability to raise adequate revenue to service their community.

With regard to Pathway 3, Brighton is always open to considering change and this includes considering boundaries changes and/or supporting more of our sub-region (and being supported by) with shared services, but we recognise that it has to be in the interests of our other potential council partners and their communities as well as ours.

Perhaps in summary, there will inevitably be a sense that there are winners and losers in all three options and without sufficient government support, including financial support to minimise these disadvantages to certain communities, there are likely to be significant challenges.

We look forward to continuing to engage in the review process and thank you for your work to date.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Dryburgh', written in a cursive style.

James Dryburgh
GENERAL MANAGER