

Future of Local Government Review

This submission is the work and opinion of the author only and DOES NOT reflect the view of the Derwent Valley Council. As a sitting Councillor I am disappointed in the Derwent Valley Council's submission to the review. It is far too brief and does not address many of the issues relevant to the review. It does not identify any savings or possible improvements to service delivery.

This submission should be read in conjunction with my prior submission (Appendix B) and the *Independent Review of Structures for Local Governance & Service Delivery in Southern Tasmania (the Munro Report) (Appendix A)*.

There needs to be a significant reduction in the number of Tasmanian councils. This submission only deals with southern Tasmania where there are twelve local councils, but some elements could be relevant to the whole state.

The Munro Report of October 2011 contains thirteen recommendations, some of which have already been implemented. The main recommendation of this report was the amalgamation of councils to form a City of Greater Hobart. This should now be applied! Furthermore the amalgamation of surrounding rural councils should also be implemented. As per the Munro report the southern parts of Kingborough should be amalgamated with Huon Council.

Derwent Valley should be amalgamated with Central Highlands Council and consideration given to including Southern Midlands in this group. It is so obvious that Tasman and Sorell should be amalgamated and Glamorgan Spring Bay included in this group. There needs to be some boundary adjustments to achieve these results. Richmond township and surrounds should be part of Sorell and the Dromedary area should not be part of the Greater Hobart Council. There will of course be other adjustments necessary to achieve a rural-urban divide.

Such an arrangement will result in Huon expanding to a population of about 20,000 persons, the expanded Sorell area will have slightly more than 20,000 persons and the Derwent Valley grouping would have about 20,000 persons. The City of Great Hobart would have some 200,000 persons. (These figures are extracted from the Munro Report (Table 1) to indicate the relative numbers in each area and will now be greater)

This arrangement would give a far more effective regional strategic planning model.

The enhanced City Council could provide some administrative services to the regional councils, for example payroll and human resources services. There would be savings in procurement in this model as well as proper integration of sporting and recreation facilities.

At present Tasmania has 29 Councils all paying software maintenance on payroll and other systems. Centralising payroll to the Greater Hobart Council will save ratepayers the annual maintenance costs on eleven payroll systems. Many other aspects of Local Government expenditure could be reduced by the centralised council providing services to the surrounding rural councils.

There needs to be a transition to this model and the Munro Report sets out some recommendations in that regard.

Electoral districts, retention of existing staff for two years, maintenance of existing depots and offices for two years, retention of say 80% of councillor numbers for the next term of councils could be some elements of this transition and would allay some concerns in regard to representation.

Land use planning has been a failure in my view. There are insufficient lots available for purchase, larger subdivisions distort the supply equation. Large numbers of approved lots restrict the rezoning of additional land even though these "approved staged lots" would not come onto the markets for 10-15 years, thus restricting land rezoning and supply as well as elevating the price of available lots. Capital gains tax provisions also restrict the staging of subdivisions and limit the number of lots available. The whole planning approval system needs to be centralised, especially the land development component.

I have been on record some 10-15 years ago stating it is inevitable the Government will take over planning approvals. Either the Northern Territory model of the multiple model system used in NSW

could be adopted to achieve a central planning approval model. This could then be reduced to a single statewide model over time.

Peter Binny
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About the Author.

Peter Binny has been a licensed land surveyor for over 40 years. After commencing private practice at Granton in 1989 he specialised in land development particularly in the lower Midlands. He developed many subdivisions in the Brighton Municipality area as well as other council areas in Southern Tasmania. He designed the services as well as the lot layout on many of these residential and industrial subdivisions.

Peter served on the New Norfolk Council from 1981 until 1994 when he resigned prior to the Council being placed into administration. He has extensive experience in Local Government extending over 40 years, both as a Councillor, ratepayer and developer lodging multiple planning applications and appeals over an extended period of time. His knowledge of the land, land use and land law are extensive.

Peter is now a self funded retiree and has just been elected to the Derwent Valley Council.