

## **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW**

Derwent Valley Council sees this review as an important step in setting the future direction for the local government sector across Tasmania. As a Council we have discussed the most recent review options paper released in December 2022 and have a number of comments we would like to share with the review board.

We as a council see it as vitally important that local identity and representation are preserved through any reform or changes brought about by the review. Council has discussed the three options put forward by the review and in the main concede that the status quo of 29 Council's across the state is not viable into the future.

With growing costs today and increasing regulatory burden, it is not realistic to expect all Council's, some with constrained rate bases, to all deliver the same or very similar level of service. That being said at the heart of local government area's are people and communities. These long standing communities have identities and require local representation to ensure those identities are preserved in any boundary adjustments or amalgamations going forward.

We would encourage the review board to consider the introduction of wards in any new structures for Council's or activate the notion of elector districts which seems to be dormant but available for use as per the Local Government Act 1993. In short we see local representation being preserved as a not negotiable for any reform going forward.

### **Response to three reform pathways**

Derwent Valley Council supports *Pathway 1: Significant (mandated) sharing and consolidation of services* as described in the options paper. We see real advantages for a new configuration of local governments not having to deal with the impost of providing identical services to neighboring Council's that may benefit from economies of scale. Waste is the most logical example for a service to be shared across a region, or the whole state. There are already some great examples of regional waste initiatives that can be drawn from.

Derwent Valley Council supports in principle *Pathway 2: Significant Boundary Consolidation to achieve fewer larger Council's*. It must be said that whilst we support this pathway we see ourselves as regional rather than urban. Therefore if there is to be any boundary adjustment or alignment with neighboring Council's we would like our regional history and strong identity taken into consideration.

In terms of *Pathway 3: a 'hybrid' model combining both service and boundary consolidation* we see this as inevitable as the status quo is not sustainable. We have a range of bespoke solutions already being implemented such as formal resource sharing arrangements with neighbouring Council's as well as a range of contractors that work for Derwent Valley Council and other local governments due to skill shortages across the state. Therefore Derwent Valley Council very much agrees with the tenor of this pathway, in particular the comment *'some communities will require more tailored solutions and a hybrid strategy can be more flexible on this'*.

### **A Tasmanian Local Government Charter**

Finally Derwent Valley Council sees merit in a simple plain English charter to describe and support the role of local government into the future. Whilst we fully accept the local government act and the meeting regulations are the formal authorizing environment for Council's decision making, a Local Government charter available in accessible and multiple formats would be a great way to improve understanding across the community of our great sector.

Overall Derwent Valley Council would like to commend the Minister and the Local Government Board for embarking on this review. It is challenging work which has the potential to have a significant and enduring impact on the governance of Tasmania. We look forward to the outcomes.