
From: Lynette Taylor
Sent: Sunday, 19 February 2023 5:02 PM
To: Submissions LGBoard
Subject: Follow up to Community meeting, Bicheno

Hello Board members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make written comment following on from the meeting at Bicheno on the 9th February. It is disappointing that more community meetings were not scheduled around Tasmania to inform people of the proposed far reaching changes to Local Government and to enable greater inclusion. I shall cover each of the major matters of concern to me under subheadings. It must be recognised that many people do not or cannot participate in online inputs, surveys or take advantage of those methods due to technological incapacity, limited or no internet connectivity or data limitations.

PLANNING:

I am strenuously opposed to the removal of planning from Local Government to an "independent" panel. This would have the potential to seriously undermine democratic accountability, transparency, local input and local knowledge from planning decisions. The Statewide Planning legislation and Local Provisions Schedules have resulted in quite dramatic changes still being worked through and understood. Improved training for Councillors may assist with this. My experience in W.A. where such independent planning bodies were implemented is that the needs of developers were almost always prioritised over the needs and values of community. Ministerial appointments are not necessarily independent.

MANDATED RESOURCE SHARING

I support broadly the concept of material and human resource sharing but there needs to be a greater focus upon the reasons behind such shortages of skilled, professional Council staff, it would be counter productive to find that reduced numbers of positions, due to sharing, resulted in less employment opportunities, The plan to better engage with UTAS and TAFE on training and education needs is a positive. Historically local Councils have employed a range of people ranging from the unskilled to highly skilled within the local community, in some areas of Tasmania the Council is a major employer. There needs to be the retention of all our town based depots and employees to facilitate efficient and effective time management. As mentioned at the forum it takes 2 hours to journey from one end of our municipality to the other, a four hour round trip spent travelling rather than doing hands on work is not productive. The use of outsourced or contracted services by Councils should be minimised with preference being given to direct employment, more apprenticeships and upskilling.

FORCED AMALGAMATIONS

I am very much opposed to forced amalgamations. Councils could/can undertake voluntary amalgamation following meaningful community consultation, a transparent cost benefit analysis process and a referendum of electors demonstrating majority community support. The previous plan around 2020 was to divide GSBC between the BOD and Sorell/Tasman Councils, this would have resulted in our small elector base being unable to directly elect local Councillors due to the large variation in comparative populations, this takes the local out of Local Government, even if all electors managed to vote for only one or two candidates that would be insufficient to elect them. The proposed ward system to guarantee representation would have only been retained for the very first period of the amalgamated Councils. Perhaps an area like GSBC should be considered more as an island would be. It should be noted that the GSBC has over the past 4 years done much to ensure better outcomes in their financial and asset management situation with greatly improved sustainability and forward planning in spite of ever reducing, inequitable Federal grant entitlements through the State Grants Commission. Greater size does not necessarily make Local Government more cost effective or efficient. A cooperative regional strategy by which neighbouring Councils can work together on issues of common interest outside their own boundaries may be useful once developed, particularly around the matters arising from climate change impacts, invasive weed and pest management.

ROLE DELINEATION

The shift of Councils from a range of statutory functions model to a wellbeing of the community model is inherently problematic, our small population base has for the past two decades been compelled to support our Council in providing or facilitating Primary Health Care (G.P. services), Aged care, Housing and Childcare among other services, to fill gaps in the provision of those services or the withdrawal of services from State, Federal Government and private sector providers. Those gaps were known to all levels of Government but not responded to apart from at the

Local Government level. On the East coast there has been a State Government push to continuously increase tourist visitation numbers, funding needs to be provided by the State to meet the associated increased demand for infrastructure to meet the needs of that increased visitation, not just within the National Parks but at the beaches, medical centres and for other facilities such as public transport. There needs to be a comprehensive process for determining which level of Government is primarily responsible for what and to then fund appropriately what is required, particularly in regional and remote areas.

In closing, I would suggest that those advocating for only three, four or five regional Councils - North West, North, South and perhaps West and East may further consider the total abolition of either Local or State Governments altogether, that would be a very cost effective measure. Having a voice heard through some sort of committee system or by participation in an online process would be difficult if not impossible to achieve, would lack transparency and not enhance civil society and democratic principles. Currently, I have the capacity to phone or email my local Council employees or Councillors who are known to me, to have my queries or concerns responded to in a timely fashion. That is what the keeping of Local in Local Government is about.

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Taylor