



**NORTH EAST TASMANIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE INC.
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17th February, 2023

Chair
The Hon Sue Smith AM
Future of Local Government Review
GPO Box 123, Hobart, 7001

Dear Ms Smith

The North East Tasmania Chamber of Commerce Inc is based in the municipality of Dorset. Dorset Council services the townships of Branxholm, Bridport, Derby, Gladstone-Musselroe Bay, Legerwood, Pioneer, Ringarooma, Scottsdale, Tomahawk, Winnaleah. Scottsdale provides the essential services of the municipality including Service Tasmania, library, banks, dental, doctors and the hospital. It is imperative these essential services be maintained and upgraded, and continue to meet the expectations of each community. Additionally, the diversity of these communities must be maintained.

The North East Tasmania Chamber of Commerce Inc writes in relation to the 'Future of Local Government Review' for the following reform pathway.

Pathway 3: A 'hybrid' model combining service consolidation with boundary reform

Why?

Dorset Council is currently high in sustainability and the Chamber considers this positive aspect will be severely disadvantaged, mandating combining service consolidation with extensive boundary reform.

The Chamber believes that 'BIGGER is not always BETTER'. Consolidation does not always save costs, often reduces resources and can create dysfunctional outcomes in the long term.

Having a larger council, the services currently offered by Dorset Council may not be able to be replicated in the larger municipality.

If combining service consolidation with boundary reform is only undertaken for "change for change's sake" and not for the benefit of either/or impacted community or municipality, then the Chamber is not in support.

What would be your biggest concerns about changing the current system? How could these be addressed?

Change in the current system, is a significant concern, including the potential loss of Dorset Council free services offered to all communities within Dorset. For example, free entry into the swimming pools, no hire fees to the local agricultural show, football club and users of the recreational grounds. All important not only to the local communities but also those who visit the municipality.

We fee consolidation with unrestricted boundary reform may result in Dorset towns losing their uniqueness and individualities.

A way forward would be the possibility of consideration be given to 'joining councils with similar priorities and providing similar services'. An example being Flinders Island.

In any structural reform process, how do we manage the very different needs and circumstances of rural and urban communities?

We stress Dorset is a rural municipality with each community being unique aspects . Scottsdale being the hub and providing all the necessary essential services these should be maintained as a priority.

Opportunities include upgrading and investing in better and more consistent use of North East Soldiers Memorial Hospital where, like other regional hospital facilities, the services offered can take the pressure off the Launceston General Hospital.

It is essential to maintain the services for the Dorset communities to keep people in, and grow the municipality Ongoing quality and consistency of these services is necessary to retain people prevent them from moving out of the municipality.

Finally, large scale urban communities need to concentrate on urban problems and consolidation of like rural communiti8es be considered a priority.

Yours faithfully,

[not signed as sent electronically]

Maria Branch
President
North East Tasmania Chamber of Commerce Inc