

23 February 2023

The Future of Local Government Review
GPO Box 123
Hobart Tas 7001

Via email: Submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Review Board

Local Government Reform

Council at its recent meeting considered The Future of Local Government Review Stage 2 – Options Paper and directed that I express Council's position on the identified reform Pathways.

Regretfully, Council at this time is unable to recommend a suggested reform pathway option until the options are subject to a cost-benefit analysis and then only after a broad community consultation with the Northern Midlands community.

1) *Which of the three broad reform pathways does Council think has the best chance of delivering what the community needs from local government?*

Council understands:

The Board has had a difficult task to consult and prepare the Future of Local Government Review paper.

One of its major difficulties has been engaging the community to ensure their views form part of any suggested changes to local government.

To date, we believe, there has been no significant engagement of the community and, in particular, the Northern Midlands community on any of the three options.

Council supports further engagement with our community to ensure that any changes have broad support.

The Northern Midlands Council is a financially viable municipality and is asset rich, and our assets are maintained to a high standard. Our aim is to ensure any change does not diminish this position.

Like many other municipalities we are having difficulty in attracting staff. This is an Australia-wide issue affecting all levels of government - none are immune.

The sharing and consolidation of services has many advantages, but also challenges.

Whether they should be mandated is another question. Clearly without question, a cost/benefit analysis would be necessary.

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Any recommended change requires a cost benefit analysis to ensure the Northern Midlands community does not lose as a result of change.

2) *What would be Council's biggest concerns about changing the current system?*

To date no significant input from the Northern Midlands community has been demonstrated.

Any change must ensure no community is left worse off in terms of representation, services, or employment opportunities (Australia is experiencing a skills shortage in most sectors, this is not confined to local government).

A cost/benefit analysis will be necessary.

Changes to the methodology of the State Grants Commissions distribution of Federal Assistance grants need to be reviewed and the calculations associated with their methodology need to be transparent and easily explained. We find it difficult to understand some of the identified distribution.

Council's concerns may be addressed by way of any suggested change being supported with a cost/benefit analysis and local community consultation.

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

All councils have a mix of rural and urban communities.

All councils need a financial base that adequately supports the service provision to those communities.

Whether, by way of amalgamation or boundary adjustment, the annexing of significant growth areas to neighbouring councils would be to the detriment of the local community. This is particularly apparent with the suggestion from Launceston City Council to annexe Perth, TRANSlink and the Launceston Airport.

The question is posed, who benefits in this proposal.

I would be happy to discuss Northern Midland concerns further with the Board.

Yours sincerely



Mary Knowles

Mayor